The Mind Palace

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/3600798.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Hannibal Lecter Series - All Media Types
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Hannibal Lecter, Nigel Lecter, Boy Will Graham, Child Will Graham - Character, Teenager Will Graham
Additional Tags:	Friendship/Love, Coming of Age, Age Difference, Hannibal AU, eventual hannigram, Homophobic Language, Prostitution, Misogyny, Gay Sex, First Kiss, First Time, First Crush, references to child sexual abuse, Animal Death, Animal Abuse, Blood, Murder, Erections- lots of them, Masturbation, F/M anal sex, Strangling, Non-con organ harvesting, non-con surgery, No sex until Will is 17- but that's still young, Hannibal chokes Will, Minor Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Non con sedation, Will has a good dad, But he's no angel, Police Raid, tear gas, References to Sexual Assault, Character Death, Dub-con spanking, Spanking, implied aftercare, m/m anal sex, references to coerced feminization, Blow Job, Anal Plugs, Teabagging, Rimming, references to rape, Barebacking, Kid Will, child!Will
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2016-08-12 Words: 90,434 Chapters: 36/36

The Mind Palace

by LivingOnTheEdge5

Summary

After an accident forces Will Graham and his father to move to the city, the pair discover a wonderful bookstore and its intriguing owner.

The Day Everything Changed

Will was twelve when his father suffered "the accident."

Supper was over, the dishes washed and put away and Will was just settling down to work on a model at the kitchen table when he heard a 'boom' from the carport and a scream like a bobcat caught in a trap.

Bolting upright, Will sent his chair flying, jolting the table in the process and scattering his model pieces to the ground; he was never able to find all the pieces after that.

"Willy!" He had heard his dad's strangled voice calling out, tense and thin, "Call 911!"

Shaking, Will had pushed open the screen door and nearly tumbled down the two stairs when he saw only half of his dad lying on the dirty concrete; the rest was trapped under the body of the tireless truck he'd hitched-up to work on.

The boy's legs turned to rubber and nearly gave out under him when he saw his father's face; he'd never seen such fear and pain on anyone's face before, and seeing it now immobilized him.

"Willy..." his father said again, and Will saw how his chest heaved with the effort of that small utterance; Frank was barely able to draw breath as it was.

Panicked, Will stumbled around his father, tripping over boxes, paint cans, and outgrown toys as he went.

He ran to the next door neighbor who called an ambulance, but more importantly, saved his daddy's life.

"Just wait here, sugar," she had said grabbing a duffel bag which he later learned was her trauma kit, "Your daddy's gonna be just fine. I'm the best nurse 'round."

And though Will trusted her, he couldn't obey her.

Shaking from shock, he had snuck back to hover just outside the entrance of the carport. Crouching there, he hugged himself, with tears streaming down his face as he listened to the soft, crooning of the woman, and the whimpers and groans of his daddy.

The ambulance and paramedics arrived fifteen minutes later in a swirl of red dust.

Suddenly, the small house and yard were overrun with young men and women wearing clean, pressed uniforms and working and speaking with quiet authority.

In spite of his fright, Will was impressed by the emergency crews and felt comforted for the first time since he heard his daddy's cry.

Mercifully unconscious by this point, Frank Graham was wheeled to the ambulance on a gurney, bags of plasma and oxygen mask hanging and shaking around him.

With morbid fascination, Will watched as a patch of dark, red blood seeped through the blanket covering his daddy's legs ;months later this image still had the power to haunt his dreams.

Watching his father's stretcher pushed into the ambulance's bay, Will hung back, afraid.

"Go to my house, baby," his neighbor had said," stay with Chuck and the boys. I'm just gonna go with your daddy and get him settled."

Then she kissed his curly head and climbed into the ambulance. The doors were slammed shut in Will's face and the siren's wail made him cover his ears and hunch his skinny shoulders.

The ambulance peeled out of the driveway leaving everyone gathered in the yard enrobed in a cloud of fine, red dust.

Four weeks later, Will's daddy had come home, driven by the same kind neighbor whom Will had been staying with. Though Will had been too young for visiting hours at the tiny municipal hospital, he had spoken with his daddy on the phone nearly every night, and together with the other children in the neighbor's household, and created many `Get Well Cards.'

Will barely recognized his daddy when he was carefully helped from the car to the waiting wheelchair.

In the month he had been gone, Frank Graham had shrunken in size, and his face was pasty under his faded tan.

But his brilliant smile had lit up his face when he spotted his son; holding out his arms to him, even though Will knew it pained him to do so.

And at that exact moment, Will felt what was in his father's heart; fear of abandoning the son who was his whole world, of not being strong enough, or smart enough, to protect Will from what he knew the world would throw their way.

Saddled with the, smothering weight of his empathy, Will Graham knew nothing would ever be the same again.

The Mind Palace

Chapter Summary

Will and Frank move to the city. Will visits a wonderful bookstore and it's curious owner.

*****New tags added**********

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for the kudos and comments. This chapter is dedicated to all of you wonderful readers who gave this fic a chance, in spite of the fact the first chapter was posted under less than auspicious circumstances.

*****Please note new tags**********

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"My days of being a mechanic are over, Willy."

Its nearing twilight and Frank and Will are sitting side by side on the swinging bench situated near the tree line.

"My line of work, a man needs all his fingers and toes and plenty of strength to boot."

Will is leaning against his daddy's shoulder on his 'good' side; the one which escaped being crushed when the truck slipped from its jack.

"You have all your fingers and toes still, daddy," he admonishes Frank gently, though he knows what his father means; his daddy is no longer the hale and hearty man he once was.

It's been four months since the accident and Frank is mending more slowly than anyone anticipated.

Using canes or a walker, he is able to get around, but his most severe health problem is invisible; the poor functionality of his remaining kidney.

"*It's not yet compensating for the loss of the other*," his surgeon had told him a month after his final surgery, "*we'll put you on a special diet, but unless things improve, you'll most likely need dialysis maybe even a transplant."*

The detached, clinical way the doctor had dropped this bombshell had left Frank stunned and shaken for hours. For a man accustomed to good health until his accident, the pronouncement seemed like a death sentence.

Frank strokes his son's soft hair with hands still callused from a lifetime of manual labor.

"But my legs aren't ever gonna be as strong as they were."

He tilts his face to rest against the top of his son's warm head, grateful Will is still affectionate at an age when most boys shy away from parental caresses.

It's been him and Will against the world for more than a decade now, and he likes it this way; his wife's betrayal and abandonment a faded memory.

He holds his only child close to him as his mind shuttles back and forth: worry for his health, worry for his son.

"Look, daddy!" Will says, pointing to something in the sky, " Venus!"

Automatically, Frank looks to where the boy is pointing, but his mind is occupied elsewhere.

He is recalling something that happened in town today, and his hard-put anger is threatening to bubble up again.

Frank was heading into the hardware store when a couple of former co-workers had stopped him, declaring it was, " good to see you up and about!"

Then, one of them had pulled him aside saying obsequiously," Thought you might wanna know, Frank. Word going around amongst the small fry is that your boy Will is a fag."

Something dark and ugly flashed in Frank's eyes when the man's words registered. He had stepped back, and regarded the bigot with eyes as cold and blue as glacier ice.

"Well, Jim," he said, "next time you or anyone else bandies about my boy's name like that, you remember that the good Lord fashioned my son, and the good Lord's not in the habit of making mistakes." Then with a face black as thunder he'd pushed through the group of men, and limped back to the bus stop fuming as he waited for its arrival.

When Will returned from school that day, he'd found his daddy, still upset, and sitting on the bench he'd built to rock Will as a baby. Wordlessly, Will had sat down next to his daddy as

the afternoon faded and headed into evening.

Frank unconsciously tightens his hold around his boy's narrow shoulders; the world's a cruel place for gentle souls like his son, and, now there's this new ugliness to deal with.

Will feels both the tighter embrace and his daddy's anger. He wonders again if he should ask what's bothering him. That's when he catches a glimpse of a faint, green light winking under the trees.

"Firefly!" he calls, claiming victory over the first sighting of the night.

"So it is," Frank says spotting the glowing insect. He feels his tight muscles slowly relaxing."I always did like those lightening bugs," he says, smiling approvingly as Will sets the swing rocking with a bare foot, "remember all those times you'd catch 'em and name 'em?"

Will grins and rubs his face against Frank's shoulder, glad his daddy's dark mood is finally lifting," Uh huh: Boba Fett, Darth Vader, Hans Solo..." he recites, knowing the surest way to make his daddy laugh.

The boy is rewarded by a low chuckle and a tug on one of his fly away curls.

"That 'Star Wars' movie," Frank says, who had only watched, 'A New Hope,' "I never did understood what all the fuss was about. Just a story 'bout a boy leaving home and chasing his future with a lot of crazy space creatures thrown in."

Will smiles at his daddy's description, "Come on, admit it! You liked it!" He says, straightening up to accentuate his point.

His new position allows him to catch the exact instant pain ripples across his daddy's face.

"Daddy?!" He says, grasping Frank's arm. "What's wrong? Should I get Linda?"

"No, no! It's just a twinge, it'll pass, "Frank says closing his eyes and taking deep breathes just as the pain counselor had instructed.

Fearfully, Will sits and watches his father struggle for composure.

Without the snap and sparkle of his bright, blue eyes, Frank Graham's face looks haggard and years older. Will realizes with a jolt that his daddy isn't healing as he should; maybe he never will.

"What can I do, papa?" He asks.

Will hasn't called Frank 'papa' since his toddler days and his eyes pop open to see what's precipitated it now.

Perhaps it's the low light, or the stress of the day, but when Frank regards his son, he isn't seeing the face of his gangly boy, but the strong, youthful face of his long departed father.

Frank's throat tightens with conflicting emotions: love and fear, hope and longing. He blinks and his father is gone, replaced by his son who regards him with gentle concern.

"We're gonna need to move to the city, Willy, " he says clearing his throat gruffly and feeling like a coward for not telling his son the whole story. "All the doctors say I'm gonna need to find a different line of work, and the city is the best place to do that."

Will's large, blue eyes keenly study his father's face and Frank looks away; his boy has the canny ability to suss out the truth in any situation and he doesn't want to show him too much.

"What do they think you can do there?" Will asks.

"Well, the man who runs the physical therapy office says he can recommend me for a job. I'd be a night time supervisor at a house for men who are getting off drugs and liquor. A 'half-way home' he calls it, and it comes with health insurance and housing."

"They'd give us a house?"

"Not exactly, but they'll help us with an apartment, and I'd only have to work nights."

Will looks out beyond their yard to the neighbor's pasture. He wonders what it's like to live in a city with nothing but buildings and concrete and dirty streets.

"We can set ourselves up in a nice little place." Frank continues, scanning his son's face. "Easier for me to maintain than this old homestead with the roof, and the fences, and the mowing..." he leaves his sentence to dangle, not wanting to guilt his son into compliance.

Seeking consolation in the night sky, Will perceives the supreme sacrifice his father is willing to make to keep his independence and support his small family.

"What about Hambone? And the boat?"

Hambone The Second was Will's dog, who, after reaching the ripe old age of fourteen, had been laid to rest under the big magnolia tree.

"Hambone'll abide" his father says, looking up at Venus," and maybe we can find a place that'll let allow us to keep a dog," he laughs when Will's head jerks around at his suggestion.

"Never knew a boy who loved the canines as much as you," he teases, tweaking Will's ear and smiling at his hopeful expression; his son's happiness makes Frank hungry to see more of it.

"And as for the boat? Well most cities have parks and such, where you can hire a boat; go fishing too if we have a mind."

Will looks back at the night sky and the two swing in silence for a while.

"Anyways, it's not going to happen just yet. The jobs not a done deal, and...we'll need to sell this place first."

Frank can't manage to keep the regret out of his voice at the thought of selling their home. And though Will hates the idea of moving he hates the idea of letting his daddy down even more.

"It'll be great daddy," Will smiles, and to Frank, the love shining from those beautiful eyes feels like a benediction."We'll be great, just you and me."

He stands up, offering his arm to Frank who uses it to pull himself to a standing position before grasping the waiting canes.

"You're right scout; it'll be just fine, " he says, painfully shuffling towards the house as his son hovers at his elbow.

Where on God's green earth am I gonna get the money for all this foolishness, he thinks, cursing his failing body as he waits for Will to open the back door.

"Thank you son, " he says, working his way up the shallow step, " Now let's go see what kinda damage we can do to that dish of stew Mrs. Baxter was kind enough to send over."

Four months later

Will is walking his favorite route to his new school; the one which takes longer, but goes past Italian bakeries, tiny florists, and colorful mercardos. The shops along the way have been artfully decorated with Easter displays for the past few weeks, and Will dawdles to examine each one.

"Good morning!"

It's the owner of "Tammy's Bail Bonds" who's busy raising her security door, "Gonna play baseball today?" she asks chummily.

"Maybe!" he calls back; they've had this same exchange for the past month, and Will still hasn't summoned up enough courage to tell her that he never plays baseball outside of his PE class.

She smiles and waves and Will continues on. He walks past jewelry stores, pawn shops and nail salons, all very different from one another, but all equally fascinating to the boy. He reaches the end of the third block and mentally prepares himself for the only part of his journey he dislikes; passing the rental storage warehouse. He rounds the corner, ducking his head as he nears the idling SUV. Two, "ladies of the night" as his daddy calls, them have ended their shifts and are climbing into their pimp's vehicle.

"Hey there darling," one of them calls, and Will hunches his shoulders, " You hurry along to school, but soon as you're grown, come by and I'll pop your cherry for you!" She and the other women laugh as they scramble up and into the car while their pimp turns to glare at the

boy scurrying past. Will fears this man's scrutiny. He has seen for himself the bruises, welts and missing teeth he's inflicted on his 'bitches.' He cringes at the sound of his harsh voice and cruel words; "whore", "lazy", "dirty" and "cunt."

Every month or so, the police swoop down to this area and cart all the women off to jail. For a week, the women are missing from their usual positions, and the pimp's car is blissfully nowhere to be seen. But eventually, the women trickle back, and then, the black SUV is never far away.

Will had asked his daddy about this one night. "Why do the police arrest the women and not the men they get into the cars with? When I'm a cop I'm going to arrest the Johns and the pimps! "

Cringing at his boy's new and expanded vocabulary, Frank had put aside the book he'd been reading, "Oh, so you want to be a police officer now? What about being a paramedic?"

"I don't want to be a paramedic anymore," Will said resolutely. "I want to be a cop and lock up guys who hurt people."

"Alright," Frank had said easily, "But until you're a cop, I don't want you walking down that way anymore. Walk the way past the park instead."

And for a while, Will had followed his daddy's edict, until, inevitably, the allure of his favorite route overcame his fear of disobeying his father and getting caught.

Will runs the rest of the way past the warehouse then enters the alleyway which connects him to the last leg of his journey. He emerges from the alleyway to the block where St. Ignacious the Martyr's elementary, middle, and high schools are located. The school's church is there too, surrounded by its own graveyard.

"These Catholics got themselves a real cradle to grave system here, "Frank had joked when he first saw the arrangement; then he had to explain to his boy what he meant.

Will likes how all the building are grouped together, one right after the other, because it means he's soon part of a huge throng of uniformed kids all heading in the same direction. And it's then, enfolded by the loud, amorphous crowd, Will feels happy and part of something in a way he never did at his old school.

St. Ignacious is a down in the heel K-12, which relies more on endowments, than tuition, for its operational costs. When Frank had taken him there for a tour, Will hadn't initially liked the old brick school which smelled of floor wax and dirty socks. He had been irrationally afraid of the Carmelite nuns who ran it and feared the luridly detailed crucifixes which hung in every room.

But Frank was adamant. He wanted Will to attend the middle school because it would give him priority status to attend the high school and the glittering promise of university scholarships. So, in spite of his son's reservations, he'd sent away for Will's transcripts,

petitioned former teachers for letters of recommendation and dragged his unwilling son through the application and interview process.

When the letter arrived saying Will had been accepted with a full scholarship, Frank had been overjoyed, and even Will was happy, because his daddy was.

As soon as Will enters the school's gate, he approaches a kid from his homeroom,"Hey," he says, dropping his backpack onto the ground.

"Hey" the kid replies, "Are you gonna play baseball after school today?"

Will sighs, "Maybe."

"Cool,see you later," he says as he runs off towards a group of friends. Will picks up his backpack and slings it over his shoulder, wondering yet again what the trick to fitting-in is; he really hopes it doesn't hinge on a love of baseball.

At the beginning of term, Will's "new boy" status and Southern accent had attracted modest attention. But after a few days, the boys in his class lost interest, while the girls just stared and giggled.

Will was never teased or bullied per se, it was just that no one took the initiative to make friends with the shy boy, and his reserved personality stymied his own attempts.

The sisters, observing his struggles, offered him kindly advice about how to fit in. But Will soon found that their recommendations always centered around playing sports, or trading Pokemon cards, so he learned to smile during their lectures, then completely disregard them.

Will didn't particularly mind not having friends, not really. He was occupied during school and then with after school tutoring so the way he saw it, he didn't have much time for socializing; but still it would have been nice to have someone to talk to before he got home.

Because of their schedules, Frank and Will didn't see each other until the boy returned at night. Therefore, dinner time had become more important than ever; the time father and son reconnected after their long absence from one another. After dinner Will would do more homework, or read, or work on a model with Frank until bedtime when Frank left for his shift at the group home.

The lighter work has gone a long way towards improving Frank's health. His last blood work showed his kidney was finally functioning properly, and his legs were steadily gaining strength. Though he missed his old home and life, Frank was content in his new one.

*Yup,*he thinks as he hugs his son good night, *Our move was tough, but as a wise man once said," You've got to go out on a limb sometimes because that's where the fruit is."*

When the final bell rings that day, Will is surprised to find it's only two o'clock, he'd forgotten that school is ending early for "teacher enrichment day."

He takes his time gathering his things and packing his backpack, until his teacher's jangling keys alerts him she's impatiently waiting to lock up.

"See you tomorrow William. No tutoring today, so you can go straight home," she says before hurrying down the hall.

Will walks out into the school yard wondering what to do with the two hours extra he's been given. Rather than go home and run the risk of disturbing Frank's sleep, he decides he'll explore a part of the neighborhood he's never been to before. He leaves the school grounds and sets-off in the opposite direction of home. After a while, he comes across an ice cream shop, and though the weather's still nippy, decides to go in and buy some anyway.

Cone in hand, he continues his leisurely way, walking past shops and cafes and pausing to pet every friendly dog he encounters. He spies a professional dog walker juggling ten dogs of various shapes and sizes and watches their antics as he happily licks away at his cone.

*When I'm a grown-up, I'm going to have ten dog*s, he thinks and laughs when a Jack Russell gets its head stuck in a discarded Slurpee cup. The dogs walk past going in the opposite direction and Will continues on.

In one particular alcove of upscale brownstones, the sidewalks are filled with kids of all ages; dressed for karate or dance or lugging instruments.

Will notices they all look a bit gloomy, and compared to them, he feels as free as a bird and as independent as a millionaire.

He is just crunching down the last of his sugar cone when he comes across a storefront with deal tables ranged across its front. Each table is overflowing with stacks of used books. Will looks up to see he's in front of a brownstone converted into a bookstore.

"The Mind Palace," Will says out loud, feeling the tingle of excitement he always does whenever he's in a library or bookshop. He wipes his sticky hands on his uniform slacks, then pushes open the large, wooden and glass door.

An old fashioned silver bell chimes when the door opens, yet as he lingers on the rubber mat, no attendant appears. Will instinctively takes a deep breath and samples the shop's aroma; it's a delicious blend of old paper, dust, and leather. Will feels happier than he has been for a long, long, time.

I'm going to have to bring daddy here,he thinks, then his mouth drops open a little as his eyes sweep over the shop's interior.

From the outside, this appears to be a typical brownstone, but now Will can see that the second, and maybe third stories have been removed; replaced with high, vaulted ceilings and colossal floor to ceiling bookshelves.

Will swivels and looks around with disbelieving eyes; he has never seen so many books outside of a public library. Ranged along the bookshelves are wooden ladders leading up to a balcony which wraps around the entire room. Will tilts his head back and finds that the balcony holds more bookshelves, reading lamps and comfy looking overstuffed chairs. All along the upper story are stained glass windows depicting scenes from nature.

"Was this a church?" He thinks out loud, then nearly jumps out of his skin when, what he thought was part of an armchair, unfurls and telescopes into the figure of a man who stands and addresses him.

"That is a very educated guess young man," the man says in a slow, accented voice, "But that is not the case. Stained glass windows were very popular with wealthy homeowners around the turn of the century when this home was built. It is they who commissioned the artisans who made these windows."

Will is tongue tied before this tall, elegant stranger.

"That's interesting," he finally squeaks out turning beet red with embarrassment. "Well... " He continues, backing away towards the door, "thank you for your time," he says, repeating what his father always says when leaving a shop.

"Thank you for stopping by," the man smiles, simultaneously amused and charmed by the boy's soft voice and old fashioned manners.

"Am I correct in assuming you have recently moved here from...Georgia?"

Will's eyes widen and his mouth quirks into an amazed smile.

"Please, let me introduce myself," The man continues, "My name is Mr. Hannibal Lecter and I own this store," he waves his hand in a proprietary fashion.

"Will Graham, sir," Will says, automatically stepping forward with his hand outstretched then stops, confused.

He's remembered too late that kids in the city don't behave like this. He drops his eyes as he whisks his hand away, wondering what he should do. Happily for Will, that's when he notices that Mr. Lecter has two of the longest, most boat-like feet, the boy has ever seen. He stares down at them, stifling a nervous giggle.

Hannibal's eyebrows raise as he peers down to see what the child finds so amusing. Seeing nothing but his shining brogues, he decides that whatever is tickling the boy is well beyond his ken; children are enigmas to him.

"You were on the right track," he says smiling," come let us shake hands."

Will nods and steps forward with the grubbiest hand Hannibal has ever had the displeasure to touch; he instantly regrets his decision to be mannerly. Hannibal gingerly shakes the boy's warm, sticky paw then drops it quickly and pulls a pocket square out of his jacket pocket. "It is very nice to meet you Will Graham, " he says, while surreptitiously scrubbing his palm.

Will looks down at his smudgy hands.

"Sorry," he says sheepishly, wiping them on his slacks with vigor, "my ice cream was melting a little bit."

"That quite alright Will," Hannibal says, placing the dirty handkerchief onto the front counter and smiling down at him. Just then a customer approaches with a question about a rare book, and Will uses this as an opportunity to make a hurried exit. Walking home, Will replays the scene from the bookstore; he's very curious about Mr. Lecter:

*There's something weird about him,*he thinks, feeling very grown-up and urbane to have single-handedly explored a new neighborhood and shaken hands with such an elegant, sophisticated stranger.

He is waiting for a light to turn green when he remembers that he never found out how Mr. Lecter knew he was from Georgia.

I'll ask daddy I bet he'll know."

And with that comforting thought Will hurries home to to surprise his father and help him make supper.

Chapter End Notes

Quote is from Will Rogers who in my head canon Will is named after.

Growing pains

Chapter Summary

Will is turning 13 and Frank is sad his boy is growing up.

Chapter Notes

just a little domestic scene with angsty-ness thrown-in

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Frank smiles as he steps out of his bedroom. He believes he's figured out the source of the racket he was awoken by.

"Hey there buckaroo," he greets Will as he walks into the tiny galley kitchen.

"Hi daddy!" Will grins when he sees his father, then a flash of concern crosses his face. "Did I wake you?" He asks clutching a box of spaghetti in one hand and an onion in the other.

"No, no, "Frank lies and gives his boy's head a quick hug, "I was up anyways. You're home early," he says, suddenly serious.

"Teacher enrichment day," Will explains as he grabs a pot for water.

"Well I'll be," Frank chuckles as he stiffly makes his way to a chair at the table. He sighs with relief as he eases himself down, "I thought it was the students who need enriching," he says and Will rolls his eyes.

"I've already done my homework daddy, and guess what?"

"What happened to your slacks?" Frank says squinting over at the dried streaks of ice cream staining Will's uniform pants.

Surprised, Will looks down at himself, "Ice cream, daddy," he says. "But guess what?!"

Frank shakes his head. "Nope son, you'd better skin those off and start soaking them if you want them for tomorrow."

Will grunts with frustration at being interrupted not once but twice. "I will...as soon as I tell you..."

"Now, William! Chocolate's the devil's own to get out and it's too cold yet for short pants," Frank says sternly.

Huffing and muttering under his breath, Will rushes to the hall closet where his sparse wardrobe is stored and grabs a pair of sweats from the shelf. He peels off his uniform slacks and is just pulling up the sweats when his father rounds the corner of the hallway.

"Dad!!" Will protests, yanking the sweatpants up quickly."I'm changing!"

Frank's blank look of astonishment gives Will pause, he realizes that Frank isn't accustomed to his newfound need for privacy.

Will feels Frank's hurt pour off him like rain off a roof.

"Sorry, son," Frank says, struggling to keep the hurt off his face, "I didn't know you cared about me seeing you in your drawers."

A vision of Will at three, naked as a fish and running through the house after his bath yelling, "Catch me daddy, catch me!" Flashes through Frank's mind; his baby boy is gone, never to return.

Feeling his father's sadness triggers Will's own eyes to fill with sympathetic tears.He picks up the soiled slacks and puts a hand on Frank's arm, halting him as he attempts to maneuver away. "Don't be sad, daddy," Will says, blue-green eyes glimmering with tears. "I'm still here...it's just that..."

"I understand son," Frank says, gruffly, "you don't have to apologize for growing up."

He turns to look at his boy who seems to have sprouted up another couple inches since last week alone. Will's not at eye level yet, but he soon will be. Frank grips his cane with one hand and his son's shoulder with the other." It's just, sometimes I forget you're not five years old, is all," he says with a rueful smile.

A wave of protective love rushes over Will as he leans in and hugs his daddy tight, feeling every bone and rib in the man's slight frame as he does. *Why is daddy still so thin? H*e thinks as his father shyly pats him on the back before turning to go. *I'm almost as tall as him!* Will realizes with astonishment. His old fears, dormant since moving to the city, raise their hissing heads. He hears a mocking voice in his mind, *'You're going to lose your father... then you'll be all alone.'*

"Son?"

Frank is watching him, frowning, as Will remains frozen in the hallway.

"Everything's alright, Chief," Frank says. "Just bring those slacks here and we'll work on that stain."

Will nods, swallowing the bile that's risen in his throat. *I'm not gonna to lose him*, he promises himself fiercely. *I'm not gonna lose him!*

They are nearly finished making dinner when Frank remembers Will had wanted to tell him something.

"What were you so excited about before?"

"When?" Will asks, as he sets the table. "Oh, yeah," he says thoughtfully; his discoveries this afternoon seem like a lifetime ago. "I found a new bookstore, over near my school. It's the nicest one I've ever seen." Will stops, empty glass poised in mid air, " And I met the owner, daddy. He asked if I'm from Georgia."

Frank smiles as he pours sauce over the noodles, "Oh, yes? He's a sociolinguistic? Or maybe just a Sherlock Holmes fan?"He hands the plates to Will who sets them on the table.

"Socio-ling-gwistic?" Will laughs as he sits down and waits as Frank gingerly takes his own seat.

"Sociolinguistic," Frank repeats, grasping his son's hands. "You wanta say the blessing?"

Will bows his head, " Watch out Lord, we're gonna eat," he prays, repeating one of Frank's old chestnuts.

"Well, that's alright," Frank says, smiling. "I figure the Lord knows we're grateful for his works, and He seems like the type who appreciates a joke now and then."

Will nods as he twirls his noodles, "How did the man know, daddy? Is my accent that strong?"

"Well, son, I'd have to say 'yes' to that," Frank smiles. "Did he mention which part of Georgia you were from?"

Will laughs and shakes his head, " No, but he told me his name, Mr. Hannibal Lecter."

Frank whistles appreciably, "That is some name, " he remarks. "Why don't we go back there for your birthday? You can pick out a couple books."Eyes twinkling, Frank picks up his glass, "A man only learns in two ways, one by reading..."

"... and the other by association with smarter people," Will completes the quote in a dying cat voice.

"That's right. What's say after we're done, we leave our plates in the sink and read some Sherlock Holmes."

"Can I pick it?"

"Yup," Frank says, already knowing which story his son will choose.

"Then I'll pick...The Hound of the Baskervilles."

"The Hound of the Baskervilles."

They say simultaneously and any lingering awkwardness from the moment in the hallway is vanquished by their laughter.

It is the morning of Will's thirteenth birthday which has serendipitously fallen on a Saturday.

"Happy Birthday son," Frank says to Will who has come in to check the status of his special birthday breakfast: Bisquick biscuits, gravy, grits, and bacon. "Don't let my doctor cotton onto what I'm eating," Frank warns as he hands Will a well-filled plate.

"I won't," Will promises tucking in at once.

"Thirteen years old, " Frank says, juggling his plate in one hand and his cane in the other. "How does it feel?"

"It feels good, daddy, " Will says, around his food. His cheeks are stuffed like a chipmunk's. "What are we going to do today?"

Frank sits down heavily and reaches for his coffee, " That's up to you champ: the zoo, a sody pop at a counter, whatever you'd like."

"Can we go still go the bookstore? The one I told you about?"

"We can," he father says and sits down to sample his own good cooking.

"Great! Let's go after breakfast," Will says, then turns his attention back to his plate.

"You're appetites picking-up, must mean you're getting ready to grow again," Frank observes as he blows on his coffee.

"Good! Cuz I'm one of the smallest kids in my class. Even most of the girls are bigger," Will grouses.

"That's the way of things," Frank laughs," wait a couple years then the tables turn. I didn't get my full growth until after I was twenty."

"How tall was Mama?" Will asks without thinking.

Frank purposely keeps his expression neutral, " A little under my height, 'bout as tall as you are now."

"In health class they told us that we could figure out our grown-up height if we knew our mother's height and how tall we were when we were two years old," Will observes.

Frank chews on a second piece of bacon, "Well I can't remember exactly how tall you were back then; maybe up to here?" He says holding out his hand at the height of the table.

"It doesn't matter anyway. The teacher said we didn't have to do it," Will says sopping-up his gravy with a biscuit. He purposely omits telling Frank about the group of boys in his class he overhead calling him 'scrawny.' Will helps himself to another biscuit and strip of bacon.

"Well, time will tell," Frank says comfortingly as he adds another dollop of butter to his grits. "Let's finish up here and head on over to that shop."

"The Mind Palace," corrects Will wiping a milk mustache off with the back of his hand. "it's called 'The Mind Palace,' daddy."

Chapter End Notes

Blessing is from the movie "Where the Lilies Bloom" which is directed by William Graham.
Quote is by Mark Twain.

Richard and Nash and Nigel- Oh my!

Chapter Summary

Hannibal discovers his lover is cheating on him, Nigel is introduced, and Will brings his dad to The Mind Palace.

Chapter Notes

Hannibal and Nigel are Danish. Nigel is loosely based on Mads' character in Charlie Countryman.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal hadn't thought about the boy Will Graham again until the moment he unpacked a box of children's novels, part of a lot he'd impulsively bought at auction the day before.

Normally, Hannibal wasn't so impetuous; buying a lot unseen. But that day he'd gambled, assuming he'd recoup his $300 investment if only a handful of the books proved to be the 'rare and vintage editions' the catalogue had promised.

Now it is the next morning and Hannibal, dressed and ready for the work day, is taking stock of his purchases.

He counts a dozen 'children's classics,' with illustrations by N.C. Wyeth and randomly opens Treasure Island, discovering when he does a beautifully penned inscription on its flysheet:

"*Presented to Mathew Rich for Outstanding Achievement in Penmanship."*

December 10, 1920

Newton Primary

Newton, Kansas

Curious, Hannibal examines the rest; they're all prizes, awarded to the same student over the span of five years. *'Matthew Rich certainly was a dedicated scholar*," Hannibal muses: 'Geography'*, 'Deportment', ' Reading', 'Penmanship', 'Arithmetic'...four for 'U.S. History' alone. No first editions, but a very nice collection. Books a boy Will Graham's age might enjoy.*

He continues to sort and price the volumes, logging the inventory into his database and only stopping when he takes note of the time. Hannibal takes a final sip of coffee and snaps his laptop closed. He walks to the window and looks down towards the sidewalk already knowing whom he'll see. Sure enough, his assistant, Nash, is waiting there on the stoop.

Hannibal glances around his apartment one last time, grabs his computer and goes down to let him in.

"Good morning Nash!" Hannibal greets his only in-house employee.

"Good morning Mr. Lecter, can I eat my bagels in here?" Nash hurries in out of the cold spring morning.

"Of course, you may, just take them back to the office," Hannibal says.

Theirs is a verbal exchange which has been repeated every morning, six mornings a week for the past several months. Every day but Sunday, Nash arrives at nine AM toting a bag which contains two poppy seed bagels with schmear and a bottle of orange juice. After Hannibal lets him in, he asks permission to eat his breakfast in the store, preferring the privacy of the office in which to do so. While Nash eats, Hannibal sorts through the books for the outside displays and readies the register. As soon as Nash is done breakfasting, he washes his hands in the employee washroom and helps Hannibal haul-out and stock the tables.

Hannibal met Nash through the man's brother, an art dealer, while at a symposium on antiques. Chatting after a lecture, Hannibal had felt enough attraction towards Richard to warrant an invite for a drink. It didn't take long before Richard was sharing his concerns about his elder brother, Nash, who had suffered a traumatic brain injury from a motorcycle injury.

"*I'm planning on moving to the city and need to find a group home to place him in. He can't stay with me anymore. He needs far more attention than I can give him*, " Richard had said while morosely twirling his olive. Hannibal had been sympathetic to the brothers' plight and recommended a couple homes he knew of in the vicinity.

One thing led to another, and Richard had ended up spending the night in Hannibal's suite. By the end of the weekend, the two had become lovers.

At thirty-four and thirty years, respectively, Hannibal and Richard were simpatico with what they were looking for in a relationship; monogamy, but not necessarily a long term commitment, and they had folded easily into one another's lives.When Richard wasn't travelling they spent most nights together, and their sex life more than compensated for their long separations.

Once they were each established in their respective homes, Richard had brought Nash around to meet Hannibal. To Hannibal, it seemed a natural progression in their relationship that he

offer Nash part time work at "The Mind Palace," and both brothers had enthusiastically agreed.

Hannibal was so impressed by Nash's initial performance, he quickly increased Nash's shifts to thirty hours a week, allowing the older man more personal and financial independence than either he or his brother had ever dreamed possible for him.

Hannibal should have known it was all too good to last.

Half a year later and Hannibal is realizing Nash is by far the more satisfactory of the two brothers. Whatever Nash's limitations, he is a man of integrity and loyalty.

The complete opposite of his brother so it turns out, is Hannibal's grim conclusion, when, during a recent Skype session he hears another man's voice in Richard's hotel room.

When Hannibal questioned Richard about it, his boyfriend had laughed derisively, saying Hannibal was 'paranoid,' and what he'd heard was ' just housekeeping.'

Suspicious by nature, Hannibal knew better, and his ardor and respect for Richard had ended abruptly.

That had been a week ago but Hannibal still hasn't told Richard their relationship is over. A streak of gleeful sadism runs through Hannibal. He fully intends to see how Richard intends to play him, knowing that eventually, his handsome but foolish ex-lover will hoist himself on his own petard.

"Really Hannibal," Richard snorts, the morning of Will Graham's thirteenth birthday, "should I be jealous of you and Auntie Lavender? Will you two be running off to Martha's Vineyard while I'm slaving away here on a buying trip for you? " Richard jokes, referring to the retired librarian who handles Hannibal's internet sales.

"Her name is Lavinia, Richard, not a hard one to remember," Hannibal replies priggishly which sends Richard into a gale of supercilious laughter.

Hannibal's eyes narrow and he holds the phone away from his ear.

"Oh, and by the by, Hanni, I'll need more money if you still want those portfolios; the bastard has raised the price."

Hannibal's impression of his ex-lover is evolving; Richard is not only stepping out on him, but it appears he's attempting to embezzle him as well. Hannibal smiles, Grinch-like.

"It's a drag, being stuck here in Paris, away from you, though my room does have a beautiful view of Notre Dame. But don't worry, my love, I'll make it up to you, you know I will," Richard purrs seductively.

Just then, Nash emerges from the washroom ready to help with opening.

Noting Hannibal's silence, Richard rushes on, "Give my love to Nashville, but before I go, don't forget, wire more m...."

"Goodbye," Hannibal says, hanging up before Richard has the chance to finish his request. "Your brother sends his love," he tells Nash who is turning the shop's sign from 'Closed' to 'Open.' Nash carefully checks that the sign is straight while pondering Hannibal's statement.

"OK. But he's not here. When he's here, he calls me and then he comes to see me. I'm going to sweep now. "

Nash walks past Hannibal to the supply closet where the brooms are stored.

"Good man," Hannibal praises, but his mind is seething with fury at Richard's avarice and deceit.

Five years ago, Hannibal's response to Richard's behavior would have been swift and violent. Now, however, as he nears his thirty-fifth birthday, he prefers to keep his instinctual savagery suppressed; part and parcel of the new leaf he's turned over in pursuit of a quieter life. Still, the betrayal rankles, and the desire to punish Richard is temptingly strong. As he stews, Hannibal's hands move rotely, methodically arranging dust covers, grouping and organizing books.

I wonder if I should ask Nigel's assistance.

Hannibal's twin remains entrenched in the criminal lifestyle Hannibal has foresworn. The last time the brothers spoke, Nigel was in Germany neck-deep in some weapons deal or other. Nigel hadn't divulged any details and Hannibal hadn't asked for any. But before Nigel rang off he did tell mention plans to travel to the Lowlands for some R&R in the New Year.

"Gonna fuck my way through De Wallen," he'd crowed crudely, bringing to Hannibal's mind a then fifteen year old Nigel bragging about being, *" a connoisseur of cunts."*

Nigel hasn't matured at all these past nineteen years, was Hannibal's private thought, though all he'd said was*, "I'm certain you will enjoy yourself. And, Glædelig jul og godt nytår, lillebror,if I don't speak with you before New Years."*

"'Glædelig jul og godt nytår, Pikhoved!" Nigel rejoined, never happy with reminders of birth order.

"Ah, yes, speaking of which, don't forget your kilo of condoms, " Hannibal retorted and both men laughed before finally hanging-up.

Richard is playing me for the fool, Hannibal thinks as he moves over to the Biography section.

W*ouldn't it be nice if Nigel were to show him the err of his ways. Holland isn't so far from that little hotel with the nice view of Notre Dame,*Hannibal's smile is mirthless. *And Nigel does so enjoy helping people find religion.*

The shop's door bell sounds and Hannibal turns to see the boy Will Graham, of the sticky hands and shy blue eyes, entering with a man who can be none other than his father.

Father and son stand in the entrance, gazing, as newcomers always do, up at the vaulted ceiling, balcony, and stained glass.

Partially obscured by shelving, Hannibal drinks in the view, thoughts of Richard pleasantly pushed aside as he examines Will's father with approval.

The man stands just under six feet, broad shouldered, ramrod straight, a lithe whipcord physique which belies the fact he relies on a cane to walk. Beads of sweat glisten on his forehead, dampening the honey blond waves of his hair and arched brows. All this in spite of the fact it is quite brisk outside. *Walking is difficult, perhaps painful for him*, is Hannibal's assessment as he continues his perusal. Even from his position, Hannibal can see the man shares his son's bright blue eyes, but unlike the boy, his features are roughly hewn, all square lines and weathered skin.

Beautiful, is Hannibal's final analysis.

Will has been pointing out the store's charms when his eyes swivel in Hannibal's direction and light-up with recognition."Mr. Lecter!" The boy calls, and Hannibal feels unaccountable warmth from the friendliness of the child's greeting.

"I brought my daddy!" Will says, like one who is sharing a rare and precious gift.

Hannibal is bound to agree.

"Will Graham! And you brought your father, how wonderful!" Hannibal says walking over and greeting the boy with genuine pleasure. "Why don't you both find a seat and rest after your walk?" He adds judiciously, mindful of the man's physical limitations.

"I'm done!" Nash says, appearing suddenly and pushing straight through the group. Will and Frank watch with interest as he stores the broom and hauls out a bundle of rags, can of Endust, and a feather duster. "I'm going to dust the upstairs now," he tells Hannibal and heads to the closest ladder.

"Very good, Nash,"Hannibal calls. "Nash works here with me," he says by means of explanation to Will who is watching with absorbed interest as the man scampers to the top of the ladder like a squirrel scaling a tree.

Will tilts his head back and calls-up to the vanishing figure, "Hi Nash, I'm Will!"

Nash's head appears over the edge of the balcony and breaks into a sweet smile, "Hi Will, I'm Nash!" He replies then disappears from sight.

"Seems like a real good worker, " comments Frank as he eases himself into an armchair.

He's ashamed to admit it, but he can barely control the trembling of his limbs; the walk had been too much for him. "Frank Graham," he says, holding out his hand for Hannibal to shake. "Excuse me for not standing; I'm still recovering from an injury."

"Not at all, Hannibal Lecter, I'm pleased to meet you."

Finally, once all the introductions are concluded, Hannibal turns his attention to the boy observing everything with shining, inquisitive eyes.

"Your visiting today is particularly auspicious, Will. I've just acquired some books I think might interest you."

"Really?" Will asks, darting a look at his father who smiles his approval.

"Yes. I just set most of them out onto the 'New Arrival's' section, just over there," he says indicating a table where a small group of people have already gathered.

Will looks hesitantly over at the adults perusing the titles.

"Are they kids books?" He asks suspiciously.

Hannibal assures Will on this point and Will heads cautiously over to the table.

"Your store made a big impression on my boy," Frank says, his smile widening as he watches the shoppers make space for his son. "And he was fairly puzzled how you knew he came from Georgia."

The men laugh and Will glances over his shoulder to see what's so funny.

Laughing and talking with Mr. Lecter, Will thinks his daddy looks more like his old self again. The two men look so natural together in fact, just like old friends, that Will feels a spike of jealousy. He pretends to examine a book on New England fauna as he surreptitiously watches them.

Though much more elegantly dressed than his father, Will thinks that Frank is the more handsome of the two.

He is just wondering if Mr. Lecter is married and has any kids of his own when his eye is caught by a name on a dustcover. Excitedly he picks up the book and races over to his father.

"Daddy! It's by Arthur Conan Doyle! But it's not a Sherlock Holmes story!" He says showing Frank the book with shocked amazement.

Frank holds out his hand and Will places, The White Company into it.

"Well, look a' that! I've never read any of his other works." Frank says, handing the book back to Will. "Looks like a nice edition, Chief."

Will picks up the inherent message in Frank's comment and his face falls.

Looking from father to son, Hannibal hopes he can rectify the situation.

"Please, Will, keep it, a small gift from me," He says, tilting his head down towards the boy and speaking in an undertone; giving away stock not being something he wishes to broadcast.

"Oh, no, he couldn't!" Frank says.

"Really?!" Will says, and turns beseeching eyes to his daddy.

"Please," Hannibal reiterates. "It would make me happy to see it enjoyed by a youngster." He smiles at Will. "Its original owner was a boy, very much like you, I suspect. And I'm certain you will take good care of it."

Will feels Frank's lingering reticence so he plays his ace in the hole. "I'd take really good care of it, daddy, and it **is** my birthday!"

Frank regards his newly minted teenager as Hannibal smilingly regards his own shiny shoes.

Finally, Frank grins and throws up his hand in a gesture of defeat. "Alright, Chief," he says, shaking his head, "If Mr. Lecter's generous offer still stands." Hannibal nods his affirmation and Will grins." You may keep the book."

"Thanks daddy! Thank you Mr. Lecter!"

"You're very welcome, Will. And happy birthday! How old are you? Ten? Eleven?"

Will's happy face loses its brilliancy at Hannibal's blunder. His narrow chest puffs out with outraged pride, " Ten?! I'm thirteen!"

"My apologies Will," Hannibal can't help chuckling at the boy's reaction." I'm not very clever at guessing ages."

"Hmmm... that's okay, "Will says, grudgingly, but his wounded pride still smarts. "Can I take it upstairs and read it?"

"Of course," Hannibal says and Will rushes to a ladder and begins to climb. "If you'll excuse me Mr. Graham, " Hannibal says turning to Frank," I'm must attend to my customers."

"You do that," says Frank, "but please, call my Frank," he says with a dazzling smile which sends a jolt of unexpected arousal through Hannibal's nervous system. "And thank you for being so kind to my boy," he adds nodding his head up to the balcony where his normally reserved son can be heard chattering with Nash.

"My pleasure, and please call me Hannibal, " he says. "Enjoy my store," Hannibal adds, beating a hasty retreat; he's fairly certain Frank is straight, and he's too old to moon over him like a lovesick teenager.

Frank rests a few more minutes before pulling himself up to begin his examination of the store. He pauses to look at a framed quote on the wall:

“Where is human nature so weak as in the bookstore?” — Henry Ward Beecher

"*Well, I hope for my wallet's sake, that won't be the case,* " he thinks and happily heads towards the History section.

Chapter End Notes

Translations:
De Wallen- red light district of Amsterdam
Glædelig jul og godt nytår-Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
lillebror- little brother
Pikhoved-Dickhead

The Portrait of Hannibal Lecter

Chapter Summary

> Will accidently catches a glimpse of Hannibal through the stitching of his 'person suit' - and unfortunately Hannibal catches him at it.

Chapter Notes

> So this is getting a little more serious- but Hannibal would never hurt young Will Graham-nor his father- just a little promise from me, the author :-)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"I got your message. What do you want?" Nigel's greeting, as always is abrupt and to the point; based on the background noise it appears he's calling from a club.

Choosing to ignore his brother's rudeness, Hannibal tells Nigel the suspicions he's harboring about Richard, pausing only once when Nigel barks out a drink order.

"So, what the fuck do you want from me?" Nigel asks.

Charming, Hannibal thinks as he pushes his way through the low swinging wooden gate which divides the public from the private section of the shop. He stands, phone to his ear listening as Nigel inhales drag after drag off his cigarette; his silence is soon rewarded.

"Are you still fucking there?" Nigel growls, annoyed.

"Yes," Hannibal says and tells Nigel what he would like his twin 'to do' to Richard. Nigel's snorting laugh of appreciation is cut short when his drink order comes back wrong.

"Er du fucking retaderet!?" He snarls to the bartender then switches to a mishmash of Dutch and German profanities. The noise on the other end of the line is too loud for Hannibal to hear any distinct reply, but Nigel's grunt of satisfaction alerts him when the error is rectified.

"OK, sure," Nigel says, returning his attention back to his brother. "*Forresten*, I'm going to need to stay at your place in a couple months."

Hannibal doesn't attempt to keep the disapproval out of his voice," Oh, yes, for how long?"

"For as long as it fucking takes," Nigel says, "It's business not pleasure. I don't know...a week...maybe two?"

Now there is nothing but ominous silence at Hannibal's end. Recalling his brother's sadistic temper Nigel proffers an olive branch, "I'll take care of your little *svans* for you... And can I please fucking stay at your fucking million dollar mansion?"

"Six million," replies Hannibal smugly.

"Fuck," Nigel says, but more in sorrow than in anger, and hangs up.

"Mr. Lecter?" Nash is hovering by the gate.

Hannibal puts his phone in his pocket, "Yes, Nash?" He asks, quickly scanning the shop's security monitors before exiting out past the counter.

"I'm going to go buy lunch now," he says, "Do you have the list?"

"I thought we'd do things a little differently today, Nash," Hannibal says and the other man frowns with confusion." Wouldn't it be fun to celebrate a birthday? Here in the store?"

"A birthday?"

"Yes. Did you know that today is Will Graham's birthday?"

"Will Graham..." Nash ponders; his ability to retain short term memories remains compromised due to his accident.

"The little boy you met this morning, the one who is reading up on the second level," Hannibal explains. Nigel would be astonished at his brother's patience.

"Oh, yeah," Nash says, grinning with relief when he makes the connection. "It's his birthday?"

"It is," says Hannibal whose curiosity about the pair prompted him to spend the past hour gleaning even more data about the father and son.

"Okay. We should get a cake!" Says Nash who loves birthday cake.

"We shall," confirms Hannibal, " and many other things besides."

An hour later, Will raises his head from his book when he notices that the store has gone strangely quiet. *Why is it so quiet in here?*He thinks, getting up and peering over the edge of the railing; the lower floor is deserted and a jolt of fear sweeps through him. D*id everyone leave and lock me in?* Is his first thought and he immediately regrets how babyish it sounds.

Don't be stupid! He chides himself, as he climbs down the ladder to go in search for his dad. He reaches the bottom rung and is met by Nash who is grinning from ear to ear.

"Will Graham!" He says excitedly.

Will's own smile is hesitant. "Hi Nash, do you know where my dad is?"

"Yup!" The man says laughing and Will's eyes narrow as he darts a look around.

"Where?"

"Over here! Over here!" Nash chants and bounds away.

Will sighs and follows, wending his way through bookshelves, tables and chairs until he reaches the large mahogany counter to see...Frank, Mr. Lecter and Nash standing in a row, smiling at him.

Displayed on the counter is a beautiful three-layer chocolate birthday cake decorated with blue icing rosettes and thirteen tall skinny candles burning with multi- colored flames.

"**HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"** The trio shouts in unison.

Will's mouth drops open and much to his embarrassment, his eyes smart with tears.

"Do you like it? Are you surprised? Why aren't you saying anything?" Nash asks excitedly and Frank puts a calming hand on the man's arm.

"He likes it Nash, just give him a moment," he says and Nash subsides still grinning from anticipation.

"I love it," Will squeaks, his voice choosing to break at the worst possible moment. He blushes and clears it roughly, "I love it, " he repeats as deeply as he can. "Thank you," Will says and walks towards the counter. He sees now that it is covered with containers of food and several wrapped presents.

"Is this all for me?" He asks Frank then quickly turns to Hannibal." Is this all for me?"

"Mr. Lecter and Nash did it," Frank says, putting his arms around his boy's shoulders and giving him a squeeze. "They closed the store and set all this up right under your nose!" He teases, giving his son's head a gentle noogie. Frank turns to Hannibal whose smile showcases many sharp canines, "My bookworm," he says both proudly and apologetically.

"Happy Birthday, Will," Hannibal says, "Make a wish and blow out your candles!"

Will stares at the sparkling flames for a moment as his brain flits from possibility to possibility. Finally, smiling a little, he leans toward the cake, blowing mightily. Everyone claps and cheers as the last of the flames are extinguished and more ' happy birthdays' are called out.

"You did it," Hannibal says, "that means your wish will come true." He is surprised when Will's sunny eyes flinch with pain.

"That would be great," Will says, forcing a smile on his face and turning away from Hannibal's frank appraisal. Will looks to see if his dad's noticed anything, but luckily Frank is busy speaking with Nash.

"Look what we got," says Nash, and Will feels grateful for the distraction. "All kinds of food. Do you like sandwiches?" He asks innocently and Will laughs.

"I love sandwiches," he says as Nash hands him a plate and utensils wrapped in a linen napkin.

"Me too, but we don't have any," Nash says, and Will laughs again. "But we do have lots of Greek food!"

"Okay, I've never had that before."

Everyone arms themselves with plates and form a line.

"We'll have to have Mr. Lecter over for Sunday dinner to thank him for his hospitality," Frank says,"and Nash too, if you'd like to come," he adds in case Nash feels left out.

"Sunday is roast beef night," Nash comments, as he waits his turn. "Do you make roast beef?"

"I don't know about a roast, but we'll figure something out," Frank says and Hannibal smiles.

The more he learns about Frank Graham's character, the more he likes him; though he's certain were their situations reversed, the same would not hold true for Frank.

"Daddy, you should make Mr. Lecter chicken n' dumplings," Will says wistfully as he examines the food before him with a doubtful air.

"Try this," Hannibal suggests, spooning couscous onto the boy's plate," you don't have to finish it, if you don't like it."

"Ok," Will concedes then allows Hannibal to load his plate with moussaki, souvali, and stuffed cabbage.

Out of politeness, Will keeps his trepidations to himself, but he plans to ask for an extra large slice of cake to make up for the strangeness of the food.

Plates filled, the group retires to the armchairs Nash has arranged in a large circle and sit to eat.

"Wine?" Hannibal asks, and Frank accepts a glass, though he's more of a beer drinker. " Or I have beer if you would prefer it. Please don't feel the need to stand on ceremony; here you are amongst friends."

"This is fine, thanks," Frank says taking a little sip. "Delicious," he confirms.

Hannibal smiles appreciatively as Frank goes on to sample a stuffed grape leaf. "That is one advantage to living in the city," Frank tells him, " all the wonderful food."

Frank forebears to mention that he and his son have never darkened the door of any of the restaurants in his neighborhood. Hannibal knows that living off Frank's paycheck means their meals consist of noodles, beans, sauce, rice, and whatever protein comes in their bags from the food pantry.

"Yes there are," Hannibal replies, playing along," though I have yet to find a restaurant capable of duplicating the dishes from my childhood," he says, perpetuating his preferred mythos of a happy childhood.

"Where did you grow-up?" Asks Frank.

"I was born in Denmark, but we moved often. My father was an engineer for a nuclear energy firm and his assignments took him to many countries. We lived in Sweden, Germany, Finland, the Netherlands." Hannibal ticks off countries from his fictitious past with manufactured warmth.

"Sounds like a very interesting childhood," observed Frank.

"Oh, it was," says Hannibal as he tops up Frank's glass of wine. The image of his father's face, beaten to a bloody pulp flashes across his mind. "It was a very interesting and exciting childhood," he confirms, turning to smile at Will who is staring at him with wide-eyed fear.

Hannibal's hand holding the bottle jerks a little in surprise and Will wrenches his eyes away, shuddering once before going still again.

"Are you cold Will?"

If Hannibal were to trust his own instincts, he would believe he'd just been made by a thirteen year old child. *Impossible!*

"Would you like to come upstairs and borrow a sweater?" He asks solicitously. *What just occurred ?*

"I'm ok," says Will, hunching his shoulders and stuffing a piece of pineapple into his mouth," I just gotta little chill is all," he says around a bulging check, his mind in turmoil. *You just imagined it*, he scolds himself because the alternative is too frightening to give credence to; that for a split second, he had felt dark and violent emotions coming from Hannibal.

Hannibal tenses when Frank stops eating and looks measuringly at his son. Every synapse in Hannibal's predator's brain is singing-out that here lies danger, and his muscles automatically prepare for an attack. The logic center of his brain weighs-in with scorn; *This child knows nothing about you, how could he?*

"You alright Chief?" Asks Frank and Will gives him a quick, embarrassed nod. Frank turns back to Hannibal. "What do you call this again?" He asks, holding up a forkful of moussaki.

"Moussaki," Hannibal replies and prepares another forkful for himself. *Frank is a mother bird drawing a cat away from her nest...*but *in this case he thinks Will's nothing more than a shy chick needing a moment to recover his composure. But Will was terrified...of me*.

Hannibal purposely ignores Will for the next fifteen minutes, chatting with Nash or Frank about inconsequential things until the boy's confidence returns and he's ready to insert himself back into the conversation. Frank smiles approvingly and Hannibal smiles inwardly.

*Fascinating. Did he sublimate his fear or suppress it all together? I was...picturing an image of far...*Hannibal's train of thought is interrupted when Will asks him a question about Arthur Conan Doyle. Hannibal smiles encouragingly at the boy and answers it with friendly ease; Will appears to relax even more so Hannibal asks his own question and praises Will's answer warmly.

He responds very well to a ' friendly mentor' even after his fright. I wonder if he'd tell me what he'd felt back there. Maybe it truly is nothing,' he thinks, smiling and nodding at something Frank is saying-the epitome of the perfect host. *Perhaps I'm reading too much into this...* Hannibal's thought is cut short when he observes Will's expression becoming more guarded as he watches Hannibal's face, and Hannibal's curiosity is piqued once more.

Or...maybe...not.

After the cake is cut and eaten and the presents unwrapped, Hannibal strikes.

"Frank, I was hoping to offer your son a business proposition."

Will, who is slumped in a chair pretending to be in a food coma, sits up.

"Were you now?" says Frank looking at his son with a proud smile.

"Naturally he is too young to work the register, but there are many small jobs Nash and I find we haven't time for. Perhaps...three days a week for a few hours? And whatever you'd agree is appropriate for Saturdays?"

Frank looks at Will who smiles nervously, then back to Hannibal, "How 'bout this, Will and I will discuss your kind offer and we'll get back to you."

"Of course, there is no hurry," says Hannibal.

Frank looks expectantly at his son who takes the hint.

" Thank you Mr. Lecter," he says, wondering if what he felt before was simply his brain misfiring.

"You're welcome Will, I hope it works out," he says then he glances around the group, "Now! Can I interest anyone in coffee? Or tea?"

"Did you have a good birthday?" Frank asks as he pulls up a chair next to Will's bed.

"It was the best birthday ever," Will enthuses, "I can't wait to read all the books Mr. Lecter gave me."

"That was very generous of him," Frank says perusing the set of vintage books given to his son, " I'll probably take a gander at a few of them myself." Then his face becomes serious. "Anything bothering you Chief? Back at the party, you seemed upset for a moment there?" He scans his son's face.

Will had hoped his father would forget about his strange reaction during lunch. He picks at his comforter's piping and wonders if he should admit to the strange way Mr. Lecter had made him feel. "I don't know. It's just sometimes I get weird feelings about people."

Frank has always known Will is more sensitive and intuitive than other children, but this is the first time he's heard Will say he's had a 'weird feeling about people.'

"Mmmhmm. And you felt weird about Mr. Lecter?"

"Yes...no...I mean I like him... it's just that..." Will struggles to articulate what he'd experienced. "When Mr. Lecter was talking about his childhood and how exciting it was...it felt... weird...like he was thinking about something horrible...but ...but he wasn't scared by it. It felt like... he liked it."

Frank's eyebrows rise in surprise. This is nothing like anything Will has ever confided to him before and he wonders what it could mean. "That must have been a real scary thing, Chief," he says finally. "Bad people can come in pleasing wrappers. Sometimes even grown-ups can't tell them from the good ones until...something happens."

"Like child molesters," says Will who secretly watches "To Catch a Predator" whenever it's on TV.

"Yes, like them. I'm not saying Mr. Lecter is one, but I'm not saying he isn't either. I don't know him well enough to know, but I do think we should trust our instincts. And if your instinct is telling you Mr. Lecter is dangerous, then we'll abide by it and never see him again."

Will feels a wave of relief that his daddy believes him and isn't trying to talk him out of what he'd felt. He thinks about that split second wave of sadistic pleasure and excitement he'd felt from Mr. Lecter. *Was that what that really was?* He thinks, second guessing himself. Then he thinks about the bookshop and Nash and how nice and normal Mr. Lecter was and how he and his daddy had liked each other. "I don't think he's dangerous, daddy. What do you think about him?"

Frank spins his cane in one hand as he considers Hannibal Lecter. "I think he's an intelligent, private man; proud with it, but not arrogant," Frank says. "I think he's most likely had a

harder time of it than he makes out and he tries to make up for it with material things. I think..." Frank stops.

"What?" Will prompts.

"Well, he mentioned his boyfriend's away in Paris on a business trip, but that they don't live together."

"So he's gay," Will says feeling very worldly, "but he's not married. Does he have any kids?"

"Not that he mentioned, but I don't know," says Frank, distracted. He's recalling the confrontation he'd had back home at the hardware store. Frank looks at Will, so young still, but nonetheless on his way to becoming a man. *Now or never*,' Frank thinks, mentally girding his loins.

"Will, I want to talk to you about something else, just for a tic."

"Okay," Will says puzzled, "what?"

"You're getting to an age when you'll start being attracted to other kids..."

"Dad!!" Will wails with embarrassment and mockingly covers his ears,but Frank soldiers on.

"Just let me say this one thing then I'll drop it," Frank promises and scowling, Will brings his hands down and resigns himself to an uncomfortable conversation. "And when you find you're attracted to someone, it might be a girl... or it might be a boy or maybe a little of both, and that's natural and normal."

Will feels as though a weight he hasn't even permitted himself to acknowledge has suddenly been lifted off his midsection. All during his dad's speech, he's been been staring moodily down, but when he hears Frank's final words, his eyes dart up to meet his father's steady gaze.

Frank's blue eyes, the anchor to Will's whole world, are shining with nothing but love and acceptance.

Will swallows, "Okay, daddy," he says softly, not knowing what else to say.

Frank chuckles ruefully and shakes his head, "I don't know why this is the first time I've talked to you about this champ. I've been...I guess it kinda slipped my mind. But you understand what I'm saying, don't you?"

"Yes, daddy," Will says rolling his eyes and finding it a relief to be snotty ," you're telling me it's okay if I'm gay, or bi."

"Yes," Frank says, "I love you no matter..."

"I want to take it," Will says cutting Frank off.

"What...the job?" Frank says thrown for a moment.

"Yes, I want to try it anyways," says Will.

Frank rubs the side of his jaw, an action which means he's thinking deeply, then he looks at his boy. "Alright son. I give you my permission. Because I'm trusting you to let me know if you have worries or problems. Don't try and shoulder anything alone. Okay champ?"

"Sure, daddy," Will says, feeling light and happy now that 'the talk' is over. He wriggles down under the covers thinking how nice it will be to make money."How much do you think I'll get paid?"

"Minimum wage is near nine dollars an hour so around 'bout that seems fair."

Will does a few calculations in his head and bounces happily."When should we talk to him, tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow's his day off. It can keep till Monday."

"Okay. Can I read for a while? I'm almost done with The White Company."

"Yup, and I think I'll sit and read with you awhiles." says Frank and Will obligingly makes room for his dad to put his stockinged feet up on the bed.

"The Mysterious Island," Frank says showing Will the book he's chosen from the boy's new collection.

"Don't tell me what happens, " Will adjures, " I'm going to read that one next."

"Scout's honor," Frank says hunkering down and smiling at his boy. "You don't have to worry about anything, son, your old dad's got your back."

Chapter End Notes

Er du fucking retaderet!
"Are you fucking retarded
Thank you BlueEyedNightwing >
for the proper spelling.
yeah, Nigel is not PC)
Forresten-By the way
svans- fag (sorry, that is Nigel)
made- to blow ones cover
far-Danish for father

Anthony

Chapter Summary

Will accepts the job, Frank has a private conversation with Hannibal about his intentions, and Will talks to his crush, Anthony for the first time.

Chapter Notes

more angsty growing up stuff.
Also, Hannibal is attracted to Frank, but this is not gay baiting- I believe Hannibal can be attracted to Frank without expecting a relationship out of it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Frank was as good as his word. He met Will after school on Monday and they walked to Hannibal's store together.

"There's where I got ice cream," Will hints as they pass the gelato store.

"Not today champ," Frank says and Will instantly regrets saying anything; he knows his daddy feels guilty that they can't afford three dollars for a small scoop.

"That's ok," says Will, "It's too cold for ice cream anyway. Hey! There's that man with all the dogs!" He says glad for the distraction.

Father and son stop to watch the dog walker wrestle with his pack of squirming, lunging charges.

"Ten," says Will seemingly apropos of nothing, but Frank knows how his son's mind works.

"What say we start with just one to begin with?" He says already grinning in anticipation of Will's reaction.

"What? When? Today?" Will's face is simultaneously shocked and elated.

"Probably not today, son. Today is just about business. 'Sides, we'll need time to look around and prepare and what not."

"Free adoption days at the shelter," Will agrees rapturously. He is so absorbed with thoughts of getting a dog that he would have walked right past "The Mind Palace" if Frank hadn't have stopped him.

"Isn't this it?" Frank says, looking up at the building.

"Oh, yeah!" Will grins embarrassed but too happy to care.

He rushes past Frank and pushes open the door, already associating the little 'ding' of the bell with the feelings of warmth and happiness.

Nash's face appears around a bookshelf.

"Hi, Nash! Guess what!?" Will calls.

"Hi..." Nash falters, face tense with concentration.

"Will," Will supplies.

"Yes, Will. Sorry. What?"

"I'm going to get a dog!"

"Lucky! I like dogs too!" Nash says.

"I can bring him over and you can play with him if you want," Will promises.

"You have a male dog already pick out?" Hannibal asks, as he makes his way from around the counter.

"Oh...no, not yet." Will says, "But my old dog was a boy so I just figured I'd get another boy."

"Good afternoon Hannibal," Frank says, shaking the man's hand then leans heavily against a display. "Will here has something to say to you."

Will feels a rush of nerves even though they'd rehearsed his speech on the way over.

"Ah, yes?" Hannibal says turning and smiling down at the suddenly flustered boy.

Everything Will has been planning to say flies out of his head under the weight of that gaze. "Um...yeah...so...um...I want the job," Will says weakly. He feels his cheeks and neck grow warm and he glances at his daddy to see if he's disappointed.

Frank smiles back and nods encouragingly; heartened, Will looks up into Hannibal's face and is relieved to find neither impatience nor surprise.

Yet again, Hannibal is struck at how appealing he finds this boy's sweet bashfulness. "I'm very glad to hear it, " he smiles approvingly. "But we haven't discussed terms yet," he adds gravely.

Will swallows and shoots Frank a wordless appeal for help.

"He means you haven't nailed down your pay or hours yet," Frank explains. "It's alright to ask for what you want, son," he prompts, knowing that Will is well prepared but shy.

Will directs his gaze at Hannibal's ear. "I think that minimum wage is fair," he says breathlessly, then intrepidly looks Hannibal square in the face.

"Yes, I think that is appropriate for the time being," Hannibal agrees, remaining serious for the sake of the boy's feelings, though all he really wants to do is make the child laugh and ease his tension.

Will continues more assuredly, "I can work two hours a day except on Fridays because I have to go to Mass on Fridays," he says looking at Frank who nods and winks.

"Agreed, Hannibal says."And Saturdays? I'm also considering opening the shop for a limited time on Sundays."

Will shoots another agonized look at Frank who takes pity on his son and intercedes.

"Short term, Will is just looking to work on school days," Frank explains.

"Of course, I understand Will," Hannibal says, "You would like to spend time with your father. That's understandable, praiseworthy in fact."

Hannibal has never seen such a look of happy relief as the one on Will Graham's face when he hears those words.

"Thank you Mr. Lecter, I'll work really hard," Will gushes and something in Hannibal's heart squeezes at the sight of the delicate, eager face. He is shocked by his feelings, "*Jeg er blevet blød på mine gamle dage,*" he thinks scoffingly.

"I'm certain of it," he says and Will basks in the warmth of his smile." Shall we shake on it?"

Will rubs his sweaty palm against the side of his slacks before offering it to Hannibal.

Hannibal takes the hot, damp little hand, realizing that other than the first time he'd briefly shaken Will's hand, its been decades since he's held a child's hand in his own. A wave of nostalgia washes over him for those moments in his childhood, when the press of his twin's hand in his own had the power to mitigate the pain of being small and powerless.

Just as he'd experienced at his party, Will is flooded with feelings he is certain are not his own: fear, helplessness but also love and protectiveness. This time around however, Will feels better equipped to deal with the sensation, and he looks straight into Hannibal's face with an expression of sympathy. A spark of understanding passes between the child and man before they both nod and release one another's hands.

"That about seals the deal," Frank says. " Though if, I may, I would like to speak with you privately for a moment?" He asks Hannibal.

"Of course," Hannibal concedes. " Nash, Will, you have the floor. Mr. Graham and I will be just over there," he says pointing beyond the swinging gate.

"Yes sir," Will says.

"Yes Mr. Lecter," Nash says then turns to Will. "It's easy; we just gotta clean stuff, guard the cash register, and keep an eye out for shop lifters."

"Okay," Will says but his attention is riveted on Frank and Hannibal as they walk a good ten feet away and begin to converse in hushed voices. Nash bustles around, gathering cleaning supplies and answering the phone as Will slyly monitors the adult's conversation.

"Hey Nash," he says, watching as the man sprays Murphy's Oil Soap on the already gleaming counter." Does Mr. Lecter have any kids?"

"No kids, no wife, no husband," Nash chants like a child reciting times tables.

"Are *you* married?" Will asks, grabbing a rag and helping Nash rub the oil onto the countertop's sides. He likes how easy it is to speak with Nash, far easier than with any other adult barring his own father.

"Nope! But I have a girlfriend," Nash says, wiping the counter surface until it reflects like a pan of cooling molasses candy.

Hannibal and Frank stand in the private portion of the store which commands a view of the security monitors and the register.

"I'm gonna cut to the chase," Frank says, who, now that they are alone, is emanating a sense of power and authority Hannibal has never felt from him before. He imagines that Frank, pre-accident, would have been a force to be reckoned with, even for someone such as himself.

"I would like to know why you asked my boy to come work for you?"

Icy blue eyes as unwavering as a hawk, stare into Hannibal's own, and he feels an involuntary hitch in his breathing, *Røvhuld*, he scolds himself, *he is worried about his son. This is not the time to wonder how your cock would look in his mouth*.

"I like him," Hannibal says, honestly. " He reminds me of myself as a youngster," he adds a little less truthfully. Hannibal at thirteen was taller, brawnier, and already capable of great violence and cruelty.

"And if I may be honest," he says, using this opportunity to boldly appraise the beauty of Frank's face," I offered him the job because I believe that this is a good place for him to be; with people who like and respect him. And because I also thought he would enjoy making his own money."

Frank's gaze softens a little and he nods. As he processes Hannibal's answer, he rubs his stubble along his jaw line, then the clear blue eyes capture the brown ones once again.

"I don't know you from Adam," Frank says bluntly.

"Yes?" Hannibal asks, brows furrowed, he legitimately has no idea what Frank's issue is though he assumes it must be part and parcel of the 'stranger danger' Americans inculcate

their children with.

Frank glances back over the gate and catches Will staring at them with absorbed attention. Hannibal follows his gaze and the boy immediately turns away and walks over to where Nash is polishing the counter

"There is no polite way to say this," Frank says as soon as Hannibal's attention is returned to him. "Did you pick my boy because you sense he is a homosexual and you think he's in need of a mentor?"

Hannibal allows his honest astonishment to show on his handsome face. His eyes flicker around Frank's features for a brief moment to read the other man's affect before answering.

"I have never felt ashamed or hidden the fact that I am gay," Hannibal says without rancor, though he's irritated by the question. "But I would never presume to ...'mentor' anyone, child or man, with something so private and personal as their sexual orientation. I think of Will as a child, a very sweet, intelligent child, not a sexual being. I offered him the job because I like him. If you require a label to our relationship, I would like him to think of me as a friend, nothing more. "

Hannibal watches as his words slacken the tension in Frank's body and he tamps down a desire to push the blond waves off the other man's forehead.

"I'm sorry if I've offended you, but my boy is my first priority," Frank says, unapologetically.

"You've had personal experiences with this sort of thing?" Hannibal asks thinking how, as a teenager, Frank would have been enchanting.

"Every town has their undesirables," Frank says vaguely then looks expectantly at Hannibal.

"You?" He asks.

Hannibal thinks about his father's justified, bloody end.

"No, not personally," he says, "we are both fortunate in that way."

"Mm-hmm," Frank hums and then his face breaks into a relieved smile. "Well then, it looks like you'll be adding a new employee to the books," he says holding out his hand once more.

"Yes, Hannibal says as he grasps the warm, strong, callused hand."Though you understand I will be paying Will with cash, so I won't be filing paperwork for him; is that acceptable?"

"I understand," Frank says, winking as they shake hands. Hannibal smiles and leans forward slightly, taking the opportunity to discretely scent Frank: coffee, wool, sweat, cheap shaving cologne, and BenGay. He smiles as he commits the scent to his Mind Palace; the real one after which he has named his shop.

Relieved, Frank nods before heading back to push through the gate where his boy is busy with a rag and wood cleaner. Hannibal follows close behind him, breathing-in Frank's masculine scent as he goes.

Will takes a furtive glance over his shoulder to see Frank and Mr. Lecter returning from the back. Both men look relieved, and Will hopes he'll be able to ferret what the men had been discussing out of his daddy.

"Thank you again, Hannibal," Frank says, coming to Will's side and laying his hand gently across his shoulders. To a casual observer, it appears to be a gesture of fatherly love, but taking into account the conversation he'd just had with Frank, Hannibal plumbs its deeper meaning; "This is my son, and I will protect him with every breath in my body."

Will nose wrinkles in confusion as he looks up at his father's face. *Why is daddy acting so weird? I hope he didn't say anything embarrassing*!

Irritated, Will gently shrugs Frank's arm off, holding his oil soaked rag up as an excuse, " I'm helping Nash, daddy!" He protests.

"Sorry," Frank says smiling apologetically at his embarrassed son. "You finish up. Then we gotta go home and start dinner."

"And plan for our new dog," Will adds.*What were they talking about?*" He wonders once again as he gives the counter a final wipe.

"We're done for the day," Will's math teacher says as she gathers her materials together. "I'm very pleased with your progress Will. A couple more weeks and you'll be all caught up."

"Thank you sister," Will says, happily.

"How about your other subjects?" the nun asks as Will hurriedly stuffs everything higgledy piggledy into his backpack.

"Good," says Will vaguely, using the beloved catch phrase of children as he checks the clock.*Gotta get outta here*!" He thinks to himself as he makes his way towards the open door. I *don't want to be late my first day of work*!

The sister smiles at the antsy boy.

"In a hurry? Going to go play baseball?" She asks closing and locking her desk drawer.

Will groans internally at the mention of his nemesis. His first instinct is to lie and tell the nun what she wants to hear, but he's from a Baptist background and isn't certain how God feels about lying to nuns.

"Not baseball, but I do have to go see a friend," Will says, thinking about Nash and Hannibal and that he wants to keep this job a secret from the school administration.

"A friend? That's wonderful William, someone from St. Ignacious?"

OH MY GOSH! Since when are nuns so nosy?

"No, he doesn't go to school 'round here," says Will taking to lies of omissions like a duckling to water.

"Alright, well off you go then," says the nun and Will sprints through the door and speed-walks down the hall. He is just turning a corner when he smacks heavily into another student.

"Sorry!" He says, then he sees who it is.

Oh no! Will is mortified. *Anthony!*

Anthony of the black, wavy hair. Anthony whose arms are two times as big around as Will's, whose torso forms a perfect upside down triangle, whose upper lip already sports a hairline mustache ...**Anthony**.

Will's brain strives to concentrate as his heart starts to pound faster. This is the closest he's ever been to the other boy and it's all because he was too stupid to look where he was going.

Will quickly pulls his backpack off his shoulder and slings it in front of his crotch- just in case.

"Hey!" The other boy says but his grin is easy and forgiving. "You're pretty fast there...what's your name again?"

Will's certain Anthony never knew his name to begin with, but it's nice he's lying to spare Will's feelings. Will's heart rate soars at the direct question, but before he can answer it, his math teacher exits her room and locks the door. She turns and immediately notices the two boys standing in the hallway.

"Hello Anthony," she says, " heading home?"

"Yes sister," Anthony says the embodiment of politeness.

"Well you two head-out now, don't dawdle," she adjures," Good night Anthony, goodnight William."

"Good night sister," the boys chime together then look at one another with scornful amusement.

"**Dawdle**?" Anthony silently mouths with an expression of such goofy incredulity that Will giggles before he can stop himself.

"So your name is William?" Anthony confirms.

This close, Will sees that Anthony's eyes are sherry brown with flecks of green and his lashes curl all the way up to his lids.

"*Please don't break, please don't break,*" Will prays to his treacherous vocal chords. He takes a breath, drops his chin and answers in an unnaturally deep voice, "It's Will actually, Will Graham."

Anthony chuckles and Will realizes his voice lowering technique has been seen through. He backs away, face flaming.

"Well, gotta go!" Will says.

"Wait! I'm Tony Almirante. I think we might have history or something together."

History and English and Religion, Will silently corrects the other boy as his feet squeak to a halt on the waxed linoleum.

Will nods.

Tony juts his chin towards the soccer ball lodged under his arm, "I still have time before I gotta get home. Wanna play some one on one?

"Ummm," Will says, mind racing a mile a minute." Sure... that sounds great! "

"Cool...where..." Tony begins before Will cuts him off.

"But I can't," Will says; this situation is going from horrible to excruciating by the second." I gotta go to work."

"Oh! Work?" Tony asks surprised, "Your family's gotta a restaurant or something?"

"No, I work in a bookstore," Will says, wishing simultaneously that this conversation had never occurred and that it could go on forever.

"That's cool. My uncle has a bodega, a corner store, that I work at during the summer. I make deliveries, stock the sodas, that kind of thing, but he pays me shit cuz we're family," Tony says, with an ironic smile.

Tony's lips are a rich mocha, slightly darker than the rest of his skin and Will feels an erection beginning to swell.

"Ha, ha, yeah," Will says, holding his backpack firmly in front of his groin. "Well I gotta go! See you around, see you in class!"

OHMYGODYOUSOUNDLIKESUCHANERD! He thinks unhappily, as he begins to back away again.

"Yeah, see ya in class!" Tony says, smiling and bouncing the ball, "see you tomorrow!"

"Okay!" Will says, practically falling over as he twists his body around with the backpack pushed up against him.

He pelts down the hallway and pushes through the heavy doors glad that no teachers or monitors are around to remind him not to run in the halls. He jogs for blocks with the uncomfortable weight of his backpack hitting against his erection and the front of his legs until his hard-on finally subsides.

"*Oh my God*, he thinks as he tortuously replays what just happened over and over again.

"*Anthony...no Tony...knows my name... and gave me a boner ...what if I get one in school?* Will worries. *Maybe there's a "Life Hack" about that?*

Intent on making up for lost time, Will races through Hannibal's neighborhood and reaches "The Mind Palace" a little after five o'clock.

"Fifteen minutes late! Will agonizes as he pushes through the door and hears the welcome 'ding' of the bell. "*I can't believe I'm late for my first day of work!"*

Will walks into the store and up to the counter where Hannibal is consulting with an elderly woman. She turns, smiling, to see where the panting sounds are coming from.

"Looks as though you have an eager customer Hannibal," she says.

"Oh, Will, there you are," Hannibal says, but his tone is stern and Will's stomach clenches.

"Will Graham, I would like you to meet Lavinia Green. Ms. Green handles my online shipments. Will Graham is my new assistant."

"I'm happy to meet you Will," Lavinia says, shaking the boy's hand," Green, Graham, what a lovely sounding alliteration we make," she jokes and chuckles softly at the boy's blank expression.

"Me too," Will says miserably.

"I'm off," Lavinia says, turning but stops herself. "I meant to ask you, did Richard ever secure those portfolios you were interested in?" She asks Hannibal.

"You know, I don't know if he did," Hannibal says, wondering when Nigel was going to get around to that piece of unfinished business. "He hasn't called for two days, I really should try and get a hold of him," he says.

"Alrighty, good bye Hannibal! Good bye Will, I look forward to working with you!"

"Bye," Will says softly, staring after the woman until the weight of Hannibal's gaze makes him look his way.

"You're late Will," Hannibal says, holding out his hand for Will's backpack. Will hefts it up to him and Hannibal places the backpack under the counter. Then he straightens up and looks at his watch.

"Sorry," Will says his fists are clenched in his palm as Hannibal scans his face; Hannibal's own expression is hard to read.

"Do you have a valid excuse?" He asks.

Will's mind races with possible scenarios to explain his tardiness. But looking into Hannibal's face, he gets the impression that this is a test of his trustworthiness and he decides to tell the

truth.

"No, sir. I was talking to a friend," he admits.

During the transfer of the backpack Hannibal's keen sense of smell had picked up traces of pre-cum amongst Will's other scents. His thin lips twitch and his eyes grow warmer as he looks down at the flushed boy.

"I see. I will not be paying you for the time you have not worked, but that is all the action I will take at this time."

"Thank you sir."

Will's legs and stomach feel trembly from everything that has happened in the past half hour. Not only that, but his underwear feels wet and sticky, like he peed his pants. He shifts uncomfortably, hoping nothing has soaked through.

"Good! Now, Nash and I have drawn-up a list of your responsibilities. Would you like a snack while we go over them?"

"Yes please!"

Will is always completely famished after school.

"Good. Take this and go into the back office. You many help yourself to any of the food set-out there. Nash insisted you needed several deli sandwiches. I hope you enjoy them," Hannibal says handing Will a typed list and pointing towards the back.

"I will and I do," Will says, mouth already watering at the thought of "sandwiches" in the plural. "Thank you."

"You're welcome. I'll give you half an hour to study that and eat, then you will begin your first work day."

"Okay," Will says, barely able to contain his excitement about the idea of plentiful food but planning to check his pants before he eats.

Hannibal nods his permission and watches as Will darts past the counter and through the swing gate. He is reminded of Frank's concern about Will's sexuality.

"*It's the age,"* he thinks, turning back to his laptop. "*Thank God I don't have to go through all that again*."

His phone dings and he looks at the message:

Done c u in a mo

"*Hmm, I wonder what he ended up doing,"* thinks Hannibal unconcerningly as he deletes the message. He has complete faith in Nigel's thoroughness, though he is left with one loose end, *"I must make a note to procure those portfolios through some other avenues,*" he thinks.

He hears the toilet flush in the staff bathroom and his thoughts naturally turn toward Will Graham and his surprising empathic abilities. *Not yet, but soon,* he promises himself.*I'll have my questions answered soon enough.*

Chapter End Notes

Jeg er blevet blød på mine gamle dage-I have become softer in my old age=,

Røvhuld = asshole

thank you BlueEyedNightwing!!!

Allons-y!

Chapter Summary

Will and Hannibal get to know one another better and Hannibal tests a theory.

Chapter Notes

Since this is my story I've gone against canon and written Hannibal and Nigel's father as evil.
I apologize for this if it upsets some readers-

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After the tardiness snafu, Will is relieved when his first day of work continues without a hitch.

His first stop is to the bathroom where he checks the front of his slacks.

"Thank God nothing shows, " he thinks.

Next he enters the office and gorges on sandwiches while going over his list of duties with Nash.

As soon as the allotted half an hour is up, Will leaves the office and goes looking for Hannibal. He finds him presiding over the register.

"I've read it," Will says waving the list, "and also, just so you know, I'll be able to come earlier if you want," he says choosing to gloss over the reason he's been kept after school in the first place.

"That will suit me very well. Did your father mention we spoke last night?"

Will shakes his head.

"We agreed that until the days lengthen, Nash will be accompanying you home."

"You did?" Will asks, resentful that the two men cooked-up a plan without consulting him.

"Problem?"

Hannibal is surprised at the peevish look the boy is giving him.

"No, sir," Will says, decorously. "*Hmmph,"* he grouches to himself after Hannibal dismisses him to take a call," *like Nash would be any help at all if we got mugged*!"

"Over here Will!" Nash calls, oblivious to the boy's thoughts. "We need to put these books on the shelves."

As the hour flies by, Will develops a habit of eavesdropping on Hannibal. He's already gleaned that Hannibal spends the majority of his time either on the phone or skyping with clients, and that he speaks a multitude of languages; some Will doesn't even recognize. "*How many languages **does** he know*," he wonders as he dusts, shelves, and sorts books.

However, spying on Hannibal, as fun as it is, isn't helping to alleviate the worry which has been dogging Will since he left school. Finally, driven to distraction, he approaches the counter where Hannibal is immersed in the study of a thick catalogue.

"Mr. Lecter?" Will calls out softly.

"Mmmm?" Hannibal answers but doesn't look up. The truth is he's just discovered the sort of Queen Anne lowboy he's been hoping to acquire for months now and he's overcome with avarice.

Moments pass before Hannibal is able to tear himself away from the publication. "Yes, Will, what is it you want?" Hannibal asks more tersely than he normally would.

"That's okay... if you're busy," Will falters, already starting to back away.

"No, no, this is nothing of importance. Did you have a question?" Hannibal backtracks after taking a closer look at Will. The boy is nervously shifting from leg to leg, "*Surely he knows he doesn't need to ask permission to use the facilities?"* Hannibal postulates.

Will stops his gyrations but remains mute.

Hannibal sighs.

"Rest assured Will, when I am busy and unable to assist you, I will tell you. Now, what is it?"

"*Now or never*," thinks Will and takes the plunge.

"I just wanted to ask you a question," Will says.

Reminding himself that Will is picking-up on his impatience, Hannibal forces himself to relax.

His actions appear to work because emboldened, Will blurts out:

"I was wondering if you know how to play soccer," he asks, immediately turning a bright pink.

Hannibal's faint eyebrows raise.

"Soccer...that is what Americans call football? Yes, I played it all throughout my youth. Do you play?"

"Soccer... yeah...but, no...I don't really play that well..." Will peters out, thinking of Tony and his invitation.

Hannibal represses a sigh and waits.

"I was just...wondering if you knew any good moves that you could show me," Wills asks in such a beseeching tone that Hannibal sympathy is triggered immediately.

"I see, well, yes, I suppose I could remember a few moves and techniques to show you sometime. Do you have a ball?"

Will clearly hadn't planned for this contingency and his resultant grimace triggers a low chuckle from Hannibal.

"Don't worry; I'm certain I can find a ball." Then observing Will's frown he adds, "Oh...did you mean you would like me to show you straight away?"

Will's heart leaps when he thinks that maybe, just maybe, he could actually play soccer with Tony as early as lunchtime tomorrow; "*Otherwise I'm going to have to avoid him,*' he concludes miserably.

"Well..." Will says, not certain what to say, but not before Hannibal has read the glimmer of hope in his eyes.

Hannibal consults his computer, then looks back at Will. It appears to Will that Hannibal is busy debating something with himself. Finally, Hannibal shakes his head ruefully, and walks around the counter to the bank of mounted security monitors. Will watches him examine each one in turn, but what he can't see are the rapid fire calculations running through Hannibal's head. He walks back where Will has recommenced fidgeting from nerves and stands looking down at him; suddenly he breaks into a sunny smile.

"That important is it?" He asks, and Will's relief is obvious in the smile he flashes up at Hannibal.

"Kinda," he admits shyly.

"Alright," Hannibal says, and begins to shut down his laptop. " Nash!" He calls.

"Yes, Mr. Lecter?" Nash asks coming over with the ubiquitous dust pan and broom clutched in his hands.

"We will be closing early today, so could you show Will how to bring in the outside books? And I was also wondering if you knew where we could procure a soccer ball this time of day."

Nash's face is rapt with concentration, busy parsing-out the various elements of Hannibal's sentence.

"Sometimes they have balls at the Walgreens a couple blocks over," he says.

"Walgreens? Excellent, I will call them. Now, Will, go help Nash and I will see what I can do about that ball," Hannibal says, as Nash hurries to stash the broom and dust pan away.

"Thank you Mr. Lecter!" I really appreciate it!" Will gushes and Hannibal curtly nods his acknowledgement.

"Yes, well go get the books in and we'll see what we can do," Hannibal says walking back to the security monitors where the intercom is located.

He takes one reluctant look back at the auction house catalogue before announcing via the intercom that the store will close in fifteen minutes and all purchases and inquiries must be completed by then.

As Hannibal rings-up the few remaining customers he keeps one eye on Will; the sight is at once beguiling and endearing. From his vantage point, all he can see through the half-shaded windows is the top of a curly head as Will works alongside Nash.

"*Den lille dreng er en Charmetrold*," he thinks to himself. "*There is no other explanation for how the child has me wrapped me around his little finger*."

Coming inside with a book-filled box, Will catches Hannibal's eye and grins."Only eight more boxes to go!" He enthuses and Hannibal has to remind himself that he is this boy's employer, not a doting uncle.

"Very well, keep going!" He says with false sternness.

Will places the box in the designated area and flashes Hannibal a thumbs-up before darting back to the doorway.

Hannibal's eyes follow the small figure, watching how the light from the entry catches the reddish-gold highlights of Wills curls as he stands, silhouetted."*Krølle,"* Hannibal thinks, emptying the register.

By the time Hannibal has balanced the books, and confirmed that Walgreens did indeed carry soccer balls, Will and Nash have moved all the books and tables inside and turned the sign to "Closed."

"Why don't you call your father and tell him of your plans?" Hannibal advises William." Tell him you won't be home any later, but that today, I will be driving both you and Nash home."

"Okay," says Will, borrowing Hannibal's cell phone to call Frank while Nash and Hannibal dig out their jackets and scarves.

"He says its fine," Will reports, grabbing his own wool coat, an automatic hand-me-down from Frank after Will shrank it in the wash. As Hannibal artistically twists a Burberry scarf around his neck, he notes how the ill fitting plaid jacket transforms the neat school boy into a little scarecrow. Hannibal smiles, thinking of the strange and bizarre articles he and Nigel were forced to wear during their own childhood; multi-colored corduroy pants coming vividly to mind.

"I'm ready," Will says and goes outside to wait with Nash while Hannibal activates the alarm.

Hannibal locks the door and pulls down the security gate. "*Allons-y*" He says and Will laughs;

"That means let's go," he says, rubbing his ears which ache from the the cold wind.

"Very good," Hannibal praises, pulling a cashmere cap over his own ears and vowing to buy a smaller version for the boy. "You speak French?"

"No, but I'm taking it in school, " Will admits then is surprised when Nash, walking beside him, takes his hand.

"Hey, Nash?" He says, cringing with embarrassment, " Is it ok if we don't hold hands?"

Nash looks down at Will in surprise but drops his hand.

"Why? We're friends, right? Right Mr. Lecter?" Nash asks, seeking reassurance.

"*Oh, no! Is he going to get me in trouble?"* Will worries as Hannibal stops walking and looks from Will to Nash.

"Of course Will's friends with you Nash. Aren't you Will?"

"Yes!" Will says sullenly." B*ut that doesn't mean I want someone from school seeing me holding hands with Nash!"* He thinks.

"Will, change places with me," Hannibal orders.

Will happily switches places with Hannibal then watches, mortified, as Hannibal grasps Nash's hand in his own leather gloved one.

"Oh…my…gosh, what are they doing!?" He thinks dropping back a few paces.

Will's maneuver does not go unnoticed by Hannibal who is both amused and irritated by the boy's response. Rather than correct him however, he allows him his space, periodically checking on his whereabouts as they walk the crowded streets.

"Will!" Hannibal calls back at the boy when they reach a corner," We need to cross here."

Will quickly scans the crowd to see if anyone is watching before joining Hannibal and Nash. Hannibal smiles and holds out his free hand to Will who pretends not to see it.

"Hey! Young man!" Will jumps and looks around. Sure enough, an old lady is staring straight at him. "Yeah, you! *Ragazzo!* When your father offers you his hand, you take it; *capiche?"* She says, her gesticulating hand bringing her shopping bag dangerously close to Will's head.

"He's not... "Will begins but before he can defend himself, the pedestrian light has flashed green and the old lady has hurtled herself off the curb and into the crosswalk, muttering darkly to herself in Italian; a language Will takes no consolation in being able to recognize.

"Come along, Will, " Hannibal says, eyes crinkling in mirth as the boy, huffing with irritation, trots to keep up with the men's' longer strides.

Embarrassed and angry, Will is stricken with an unpleasant revelation, "*Does it bother daddy I don't hug him or hold his hand like I used to?"* He ponders as he's nudged and jostled by the crowd. "*At least I get along with him, not like all those kids at school who say they hate their parents,"* he thinks comfortingly to himself.

"Fucking faggots!" a sudden shout nearby makes Will jump a second time; this time it is a young man who is sneering as Hannibal and Nash pass. Other than a minuscule hitch in Hannibal's stride, it doesn't appear that he has noticed and Will hurries after him ducking his head when it is his turn to pass by.

"Hey kid, those your two daddies?" The young man hurls after Will. "You're going to be a little faggot just like them when you grow up?" He jokes, alternatingly laughing and coughing at his own wit. Will sprints past the man and breathes a sigh of relief when he sees Hannibal waiting for him at the Walgreen's entrance. Hannibal looks searchingly into the boy's face.

"Nash is already inside. Are you alright?" He asks.

"I'm fine," Will says though he's still shaken from the verbal attack.

"Good, let's go in," Hannibal says, ensuring Will has entered the store before looking down the street and studying the heckler with absorbed interest. It is only after Hannibal has committed every detail of the man to memory that he finally enters the store.

"Almost, try again," Hannibal advises.

Will and Hannibal are outside in the large brick courtyard which lies behind his brownstone. It is dark now and the space is lit by enormous floodlights reminiscent of a football stadium. Hannibal, clad in track pants, t-shirt and sneakers, has been demonstrating to Will some receiving, passing, and shooting techniques.

The lessons have not been going well.

Will tries again but his coordination leaves much to be desired and he bites his lower lip as tears of frustration smart in his eyes. "I can't do it!" He says and stomps over to a bench where he slumps down into a dejected heap.

"Don't worry," Hannibal says walking over to him, "it will come. It takes practice to learn a new skill." Seeing his words are having no effect on the boy's mood, he decides to end the lesson. "Anyway, it's high time I took you home," He adds.

"Thanks for trying," Will says, feeling sorry for himself.

"May I ask why it is important that you become a soccer expert in one day?"Hannibal asks, pulling on his track jacket.

"I wanted to play with the kids at school," Will says. "*And now I'm going to have to avoid Tony,"* he thinks. This thought is so worrisome that it freezes him in place.

Hannibal hides a smile when Will's face morphs into a mask of tragedy.

"Come now, it can't be bad as all that," he says, thinking," *there is more to this story than meets the eye*. "Have you been teased about your ability?"

Will's embarrassment prompts him to drop his head and pretend to have problems with the zipper of his jacket. "No," he admits.

Then Hannibal is hit with a flash of inspiration.

"You want to impress someone," he concludes.

Will's head shoots up, his eyes round with astonishment.

"How..." he says.

"You think just because I'm old, I don't remember what it feels like to be young?" Hannibal chides, but his smile is warm and it elicits a reluctant smile from Will in return.

"I don't think you're *that* old," Will says innocently and Hannibal laughs and ruffles the top of the boy's head.

"Well, thank you," he says, fondly," I certainly don't feel old, but there it is. May I ask whom it is you'd like to impress?"

"Ummm," Will stalls and Hannibal instantly regrets trying to force a confidence.

"That's alright, *Hvalp*," Hannibal says," never mind, let's just get you home."

Will nods, relieved at not having to divulge his crush. "*Hvalp?"* He asks, crinkling his nose.

"Yes, it means 'puppy' in Danish," Hannibal explains.

"Hmmm," Will says, as Hannibal shuts off the outside lights and locks up," is that what your dad called you?" He asks, hauling his backpack onto his back.

Seeing a way to test a theory, Hannibal allows himself to be engulfed with the emotions he felt as a child when his father climbed into his bed at night, hissing taunts calculated to humiliate and wound; "*Luder"* and "*Tæve"* in particular.

Out of the blue, Will finds he is having trouble breathing and his heart is racing. "I think I'm having a heart attack!" He pants, dropping his backpack and looking frantically up at Hannibal. Hannibal immediately recalls the blissful holiday he'd spent last year in Tahiti and Will sways and nearly falls from the quick shift in emotions.

"Will," Hannibal says, placing two hands on either side of the boy's face and tenderly pushing the sweaty curls off his forehead. He tilts the boy's head up until the distraught blue eyes meet his own. "I apologize for doing that to you."

Comprehension dawns on Will's face and his body stiffens.

Hannibal stares down into the young face and sighs, already regretting the necessity of putting the child through such agony to satisfy his own curiosity.

"You felt what I felt, didn't you?"

Fear, relief, and anger flicker across the boy's face as he stares challengly back.

Hannibal drops his hands to Will's shoulders and wordlessly pulls the boy to his chest. Pressed against him, Hannibal feels Will's heart beating like a small frantic animal as the boy attempts to escape his embrace.

"Shhh, shh," Hannibal soothes, resting his chin atop the boy's head. "You're alright, I would never hurt you. I'm sorry." He is relieved when the boy relaxes slightly and he holds him out at arm's length the better to study his face.

Will's blue eyes are bright with unshed tears and anger as he stares up at Hannibal. "How did you know?" Will asks, pulling away from Hannibal's grasp and wrapping his arms around himself.

Hannibal raises his hand in supplication, "I first suspected something at your party," he admits remorsefully.

Will's look of fear brings Hannibal up hard; he rushes to amend his statement. "I'm sorry it frightened you, it was merely a memory."

Will's eyes dart around, clearly searching for an escape route and Hannibal backs away from the child to allow him more space.

"I'm your friend Will," he says, coaxingly, "I would never hurt you. But I can't always control what I feel and what I remember. That is not fair to me."

He sees the struggle going on inside the boy and presses his advantage."Have you ever seen, or heard me act in a cruel fashion?"

Will slowly shakes his head, "No," he admits in a tiny voice.

"Have I ever done or said anything that makes you feel unsafe while in my presence?"

Once again the slow shake, "No."

Hannibal smiles and reaches out one hand, "Well then, can't we still be friends?" He says tilting his head and looking affectionately down at the boy.

Will's look is measured and Hannibal feels like a soul being scrutinized by the three judges of the Underworld.

"I need to think about it," Will says finally.

Hannibal tamps down a wave of impatience, reminding himself that gifted as the boy may be, he is still merely a child.

"Alright," he says scooping up Will's discarded backpack. "I'll take you home now," he says and begins walking towards the garage. He is more than pleased when Will catches up with him and spunkily pulls the backpack out of his hand. "*Perhaps we can work through this after all,*" he thinks. "Wait here while I back the car out," he instructs the boy.

By the time Will climbs inside Hannibal's sedan, the heater and seat warmers have dispelled the spring chill. Will snuggles into the softness of the leather seat and glances over at Hannibal, "What?" he asks.

"Seatbelt," Hannibal reminds him, checking his mirrors and waiting as Will snaps the shoulder harness into place.

"Ready," Will says.

"Alright," Hannibal says, easily, "Allons-y." But this time, Will does not smile at the phrase.

It is only as Hannibal is driving down the street that his keen ear picks up a faint utterance, barely audible over the noise of the fan.

"Allons-y," the boy says softly, as if to himself, while he stares out of the window and into the darkening night.

Chapter End Notes

Danish translations provided by the wonderful and delightful BlueEyedNightWing- thank you BB!!!

Den lille dreng er en Charmetrold-this little boy is a charmer.
Krølle=Curly
Charmetrold=Charmer. (Charming Troll)
Luder=Whore.
Tæve=Bitch.

The Burden of Empathy

Chapter Summary

Will sees Tony again. Later, he recalls a life changing memory about his father.

Chapter Notes

trying to describe Will's empathy, as it is portrayed in the show, was super hard for me and took WAY too much time- therefore this is a rather short chapter- my apologies.

- WARNING- Will is going to remember how a dog was killed- it is not described in detail, but if you are like me and have foolishly looked at too many dog rescue videos, this could be extremely triggering!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hey!"

Will's stomach gives a little flip when he looks around to see Tony walking towards him. Will's own grin of acknowledgement fades when he notices Tony is clutching a soccer ball and isn't alone.

"Hey!" Will says, cringing inside when he knows he can't escape the inevitable. He grabs his history text and slams his locker closed.

"We were just going to go play, wanna come?" Tony asks.

Will can't help glancing at the two 'friends' who look less than thrilled by the invitation; the taller of the two even going so far as to snort and send his friend some side eye.

Will feels like someone's punched him in the stomach.

"Uh, thanks, but I gotta go finish something," he says slamming his locker shut and moving away.

Tony's eyes narrow and he looks challengingly at his friends.

"It's cool if Will plays with us, right?" He demands.

"Sure."

"Yeah."

The two boys chime in and Tony looks coaxingly back at Will, "See?"

Will feels his face growing hot; time to make a speedy exit.

"Great! Thanks! Wish I could, but I gotta finish some homework. See you in Religion!" He says walking backwards, hoping he doesn't collide with anything or anybody.

"Okay," Tony calls back.

Will turns and begins to walk away but not before he hears Tony's voice harsh with disapproval.

"Shit dudes! That was fucking rude of you. He's a good guy!"

Will hurries away; he doesn't want to hear what the other boys have to say about him, he has a pretty good idea already. Besides, all he can think about right now is that Tony stuck up for him.

Tony stuck up...for him.

Just that one little gesture and Will's body feels prickly.

"*Who cares what those asshole jocks think about me?* " He thinks as he reaches the library's doors and slips inside. The screams and shouts of kids on their lunch break end abruptly when the heavy doors swing shut.

Will loves it in here.

He walks past the closed circulation desk where a parent volunteer presides, towards his preferred row of cubicles ranged against a far wall. The kids who hang out in the game room are already here, engaged in a riotous round of Magic.

"*Nerds and rejects*," Will thinks, glancing in as he passes, "*that's what those fuckhead jocks think we are. Just cuz we'd rather relax and not deal with competitive asswipes like them."*

Will's jaw clenches and he slams his backpack down hard on the ground, earning him a look of disapproval from the parent on duty.

"*Oh, fuck off,"* he thinks, mutinously as he slumps down onto a cubicle chair and stares at the freshly penciled graffiti of dicks and boobs.

From the game room sudden hoots of derision sound and the supervisor hurries over to admonish them.

Will feels a wave of weariness for the whole thing: pleasing his teachers, getting along with classmates, endless homework; all of it.

He cradles his head in his hands and closes his eyes, immediately an image flows up from the darkness, a bird's eye view of "The Mind Palace's" main floor from its second level balcony.

Then a face appears, strong and smiling.

Mr. Lecter.

"*Oh, yeah, him. Can't have one without the other,"* Will thinks.

He examines the face critically. Ash-brown hair brushed back, sharp nose and cheek bones, deep-set piercing eyes. Will squirms self consciously remembering how effortlessly Mr. Lecter had held him in place while he struggled. *"Like I was a weak little baby,"* he thinks, grimacing.

"*I'm your friend Will. I would never hurt you. But I can't always control what I feel and what I remember. That is not fair to me."*

Will's eyes pop open.

Another memory has just been jogged-free:

He is little, four or five and returning from a camping trip with his daddy. Suddenly Frank slams on the brakes, bringing their truck to a jolting halt.

Swearing and seething with rage for some unknown reason, Frank had ordered his startled son to "Stay here, I'll be right back," before leaping out of the truck and disappearing from sight.

Frank's violent emotions and language were more than enough to send little Will into hysterics. He remembered crying and pleading, "Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!" over and over as he sat strapped to his booster seat, too afraid to unbuckle it and investigate where his father had gone.

After what seemed like hours, his daddy returned, flinging himself into the front seat and slamming the door behind him. The air around Will seemed to wobble when he saw that his daddy's hands and arms were covered in red, sticky blood. Then Frank's face swiveled to look back at him; the familiar blue eyes a stark contrast in a grim, blood streaked face.

"Its okay bubba don't cry, daddy's not hurt," Frank had said, turning the key and gunning the motor. They'd barreled up and off the shoulder, skidding and rocking as the tires spun on the gravel road before straightening out and peeling away."It's okay tiger, let's get home and I'll tell you all about it." His daddy promised, as he eyed Will in the rearview mirror. Will could feel his daddy's deep concern that he'd curled himself into a tight ball and begun to suck his long-abandoned thumb.

All the long car ride home, Will sucked his thumb as Frank's soothing voice poured over him like a stream. When they finally reached home, Will spoke for the first time, "I'm sorry daddy," he'd said, tears streaming down his face.

"Oh, sweetheart," Frank said mournfully when he discovered Will had peed himself. " It's okay; everything is going to be okay," he said as he held his son in his arms. Eight years later and Will can still smell the coppery scent of blood clinging to his daddy as he carried Will into the house.

Will's next recollection is of being in the shower with his daddy, a rare occurrence by the time he'd reached the age of five, watching how the water bubbling down the drain changed from red, to pink to clear as his daddy soaped and scrubbed himself clean. Then Frank had dried and dressed them both for bed even though it wasn't nighttime; Will remembers being puzzled by that. He doesn't remember shivering, but he must have been, because he'd been swaddled in a blanket and carried outside to their special spot; the swinging bench Frank had built when Will was a newborn.

Rocking and cuddling, his son, Frank had told Will a heavily edited version of what had occurred.

"Daddy saw a hurt dog and went to help him. But he died before I could do anything for him."

Then as Will began to cry again Frank felt compelled to add," Don't cry bubba. He didn't feel pain, he just fell asleep."

But Will remained inconsolable, burdened with a secret he was too afraid to divulge, torn between love and fear for the man who was the epicenter of his world.

Wise beyond his years Will knew that his daddy would never forgive himself if he discovered how Will's empathy had made him an unwilling witness to his father's crime.

How, while out of sight in the truck Will had felt what Frank felt while he viciously beat a man for torturing a dog to death.

"I couldn't tell daddy," Will thinks shivering at the memory.*"That was the worst part, not being able to tell anyone what I felt."*

During the days that followed Will remembers struggling to understand who his father was: loving daddy or murderous stranger. He suffered through so many nightmares Frank finally allowed him sleep in his room where he remained for a whole month.

Then, slowly, as the weeks trickled by, Will recovered from the incident. Even going so far as to convince himself the whole terrible thing had never happened; until the next time his empathy flooded him with feelings and impressions which were not his own.

Then Will knew he had to do something.

So little Will came to a decision; he would hide his empathic ability from everyone, including his own father.

"*So that's what I did*," Will thinks," *what else could I do?"*

Day by day, month by month, Will built-up internal defenses. He learned to create buffers between himself and other people through a complicated system of checks and balances. Even his father never suspected what went on inside the curly, little head. His empathy remained his own secret world until the day he met Hannibal Lecter, a man whose violent memories overwhelmed Will's aegis and who somehow deduced how Will's empathy manifested itself.

Will still isn't certain how that should make him feel, relieved or afraid.

"*He knows. What if he tells dad? He can't! I won't let him!"* Will agonizes resolving to speak with Hannibal about his secret the minute he arrives at work.

Another shout from the game room rouses Will from his dark thoughts. This time, however, its quickly followed by a chorus of juvenile shushing, the occupants clearly hoping to avoid adult attention. Will smiles and glances over at the supervisor who is looking at the room with irritation before looking back down at her book.

"*Not worth it,"* Will concludes.

He tilts his chair backwards until he can see into the room, absentmindedly rocking back and forth for a full minute before letting his chair thump to the ground.

"*Just do it,"* he thinks and walks over to the open door.

"Hey," he says, stepping into the warm, stuffy, room, "can I play?"

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal read Frank correctly- he is/was capable of violence- just something to think about as this story winds along its merry way.

NOTE: I promised that Will is not going to experience bullying as a storyline, but he IS in middle school so it ain't sunshine and roses either.

Collateral Damage

Chapter Summary

Hannibal discovers Richard's fate.

++++++ PLEASE CHECK UPDATED TAGS++++++++++++++

Chapter Notes

This is actually part of a longer chapter which I don't have time to proof so I'm puting this up with another chapter to follow in a few days.
I can't believe Season 3 is tonight. I'm scared and excited but mostly scared.

On the upside- I can't wait for all the juicy fanfics the new season will be inspiring!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will knows something is wrong before he even sets foot into "The Mind Palace."

Horribly wrong.

He peers through the glass to see customers crowded against the door and feels their collective nervous energy pulsing through him like a shock wave.

Will pushes the door open and has to weave his way through a sea of adult bodies. "Excuse me, excuse me," he says.

A high pitched scream stops him cold.

Nash.

Will forces himself to the front of the silent crowd to find Nash crumpled on the floor in front of the counter with his head cradled on Hannibal's lap.

Another keening wail rises from the prone man and Will's frightened eyes seek out Hannibal's. Hannibal's face is drawn and tight and Will struggles against tumbling headfirst into the man's dark emotions.

"William," Hannibal says when the boy appears, and the emotions in Will's head shift like colors in a kaleidoscope. Hannibal is now radiating nothing but peaceful calm. "Could you assist me please?"

Obediently Will walks over and sinks to his knees beside Hannibal but his hands are trembling.

"Nash and I have received some bad news," Hannibal murmurs into Will's ear as he transfers Nash's head onto Will's lap and places the boy's hands onto the top of Nash's soft afro.

He comfortingly pats Will's head once before rising to his feet and addresses the curious onlookers.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have experienced an unexpected tragedy in the family. I apologize for the inconvenience but we will be temporarily closing the store."

Nash wraps his arms tight around Will's waist, weeping, and moaning.

"Its okay, Nash," Will says, though he knows it's a stupid thing to say. Nothing about this feels okay to Will.

"He...comes to see me...he brings donuts!" Nash wails and Will looks anxiously over to where Hannibal is locking the door behind the last customer. Hannibal returns and kneels next to Will but doesn't dislodge Nash from his lap. He brings his mouth close to Will's ear.

"We just received a call that Nash's brother Richard was beaten and robbed while on a trip in Paris..."

"He's deeeeead," Nash cuts in, wailing and clutching Will more tightly, and Will's mind scrabbles to protect itself from Nash's blinding pain.

"...and succumbed to his injuries this morning," Hannibal finishes.

"*You seem fine with it*," Will thinks resentfully wondering how Hannibal remains calm with a murdered boyfriend and his inconsolable brother collapsed on his floor.

As though responding to Will's thoughts Hannibal looks sorrowfully down at Nash. "This is not my time to grieve. Not when Nash is in such a desperate state." Hannibal's words sound kind, but the emotions behind them feel wooden and hollow.

Will chides himself for his lack of charity.

"How did you find out. Did Nash tell you?" Will whispers as he awkwardly rubs Nash's broad back. His legs are getting numb from the combination of Nash's weight and the death grip he has around Will's waist. He wishes Hannibal would take over.

"No, the hospital in Paris called. They found my business card in Richard's personal effects," says Hannibal still furious with Nigel for that slovenly mistake but suppressing his rage in deference to Will's abilities.

"Oh..." Will says, his legs are throbbing now but at least Nash's sobs have quieted to a gentle whine.

"Someone from his group home is coming to collect him, they'll be here any minute," says Hannibal.

Will nods and attempts to shift into a more comfortable position when Nash unexpectedly flings himself upwards, head butting Will on his way up. Will squeals in pain as Nash's head connects with his nose and he's catapulted backwards like a rag doll.

Will skids across the floor on his back then lies dazed, blood trickling from his nose and down over his lips.

"**No! No! No!"** Nash screams as he rises to his feet, clutching his head in his hands.

Will is still cowering on the ground when he sees Hannibal wrap his long arms around Nash's back, pinning Nash's flailing arms to his sides.

Nash's dark eyes, usually so sweet and mild are snapping with fury as he twists and growls attempting to break Hannibal's grasp.

Will scrambles to distance himself from the pair grappling above him. He manages to push himself alongside the counter where he peeks around to see Nash still wrapped in Hannibal's embrace but thankfully no longer struggling.

Hannibal's chin is hooked over Nash's shoulder and he's crooning a quiet song directly into the other man's ear.

Will begins to cry, his defenses no longer strong enough to bear Nash's pain. Hot tears stream down Will's checks mixing with sticky blood on their way down and splash onto the polished wood below.

"Will?"

Will looks up from the floor shiny with tears and sees Hannibal helping a pliant Nash down onto a chair.

"It's alright*, basse* " Hannibal says, to both the man and the boy. "Everything is going to be alright."

Will shakes his head and wipes his eyes with the back of his hand.

Slumped in the chair Nash begins to whimper like a frightened child and Hannibal takes the man's limp hands into his own.

"Nash? Your friends from the group home are here now. They're going to take care of you."

Startled, Will looks over at the door. Sure enough, two people are standing outside the shop. Sharp staccato raps echo through the hushed room.

Nash lifts his face to Hannibal. "Richie," he says then his mouth pulls downwards and he begins to cry again.

Hannibal squeezes Nash's hands then goes to let the staff members in.

"Nash?"

Nash spots the young woman and raises both arms like a child requesting to be picked up.

Will swallows hard and whimpers before he can stop himself.

"It's okay Nashy. Let's get you home," the woman smiles.

Together, she and her coworker help Nash up;wrapping their arms around his back and supporting his weight.

"Thanks for calling us," the woman says to Hannibal, as Nash rubs his wet face against her shoulder. "We'll..." she stops, when she sees Will's bloody, tear stained, face peering up at her.

"What happened?" She asks.

"It was an accident."

"He tripped."

Will and Hannibal's quickly reply in unison.

"Better ice that nose," the woman advises. Then she pats Nash's wet face and threads the fingers of her hand through one of his, "Poor Nashy. Let's go home, okay?"

Nash sniffs and nods and the workers smile approvingly.

"We'll let you know when he feels like coming back to work," the man tells Hannibal.

"Good bye Nash!" Hannibal and Will call after him.

Hannibal closes and locks the door then stands peering out at nothing until a wet sniff from the boy directs his attention back to Will.

He walks over to where Will is still crouched on the ground seemingly in a state if shock and extends a hand. "Alright?"

"I'm okay," Will says gruffly taking Hannibal's hand and allowing himself to be pulled to a standing position.

"Hmm," Hannibal says dubiously, studying the boy's face which Will quickly lowers to avoid further scrutiny. He gingerly wipes his throbbing nose with his shirt sleeve; Hannibal wincing at his choice for an impromptu handkerchief.

"Is it broken?" Will worries as he explores his nose with his finger tips.

Without warning, Hannibal grasps Will's face between his hands and peers intently at the boy's blood encrusted nose before gently probing the length of it with long, slender fingers. Caught off guard, Will stiffens at the contact and his eyes dart away from Hannibal's piercing gaze.

"No, it's not broken, but it should be iced," is Hannibal diagnosis, and releases Will's face to retrieve a box of Kleenex.

Will touches his face where Hannibal's hands were, milliseconds ago. "*Oh my God,"* he prays silently as his penis twitches in response to the manhandling," *don't be such a perv!"* He begs his unruly organ as it begins to swell.

"Let's go upstairs *baryl* and put some ice on that nose," Hannibal is handing a Kleenex to Will who is now suffering the torments of the damned. "This way," Hannibal says walking down the hallway assuming Will is following . It's not until Hannibal pushes through the swinging gate that he notices the boy is not behind him.

"Will? Are you feeling light headed? Would you rather to take the elevator?" Hannibal asks looking backwards, brows knit.

"Maybe I should just wash my face in the bathroom and go home," Will says, his voice squeaky with tension. Hannibal frowns.

"I think your father would agree with me that we should apply ice as soon as ...oh!" Hannibal says, his face changing. "Are you nervous about coming up to my apartment?"

Interpreting Will's silence as tacit agreement Hannibal shakes his head. "*One step forward, two steps back,"* he thinks.

"I'm sorry, Will, this has all been rather upsetting. But would you please grant me this one favor and stay here while I bring down an ice pack?" Hannibal asks and waits until Will reluctantly nods.

"Good boy," Hannibal says and disappears down the hallway and through a door before Will can say anything else.

Will walks goes over to the armchair recently vacated by Nash and collapses onto its plush softness. Above his head, Will hears the creak and shift of wooden beams as Hannibal ascends the staircase and crisscrosses the floor of his apartment.

"*Go down, go down, go down,"* he orders his erect member thinking about nuns, homework, and dodgeball to speed the process.

"*Thank God*," he thinks when the tent in his pants subsides just in time for Hannibal's reappearance with a bag of ice. Unthinkingly, Hannibal leans over Will to apply it and is surprised when the boy snatches it out of his hands.

"Thanks," Will says perfunctorily preferring to appear rude than to have another appearance of his boner.

Hannibal looks confounded but chooses to say nothing. "*Teenagers,"* he thinks walking back behind the counter to place a call to Nash's residence.

"*A boner...from him touching me...really?"* Will agonizes as he ices his nose.

"He's already in bed asleep," Hannibal informs Will who nods and grunts.

Hannibal's thin lips twitch at the troglodyte response but all thoughts of the boy's rudness are quickly displaced when he sees the "One new message":

" Dear Mr. Lecter the item you purchased has cleared customs and is now available for pick up."

"*I doubt even Richard could have negotiated a better price, the deceiving Horeunge* ," Hannibal thinks savagely as he makes a note on his phone.

Though Hannibal doesn't regret the permanency of Nigel's actions, he does admit that it has resulted in more work for him at this end.

"*The man got what he had coming to him, but what to do about Nash?"*

Switching gears he looks up from his laptop to see Will watching him; a sourpuss expression on his childish face.

Hannibal chuckles; Will looks so adorably cranky.

"Would you like me to drive you home?"

"No, thanks, I can walk."

"Or you could stay and work for a few hours. I'm just about to reopen the store. I would drive you home later."

Will considers the offer and decides he wants to work. He needs the money.

"Okay, where should I put this?" He asks indicating the ice pack.

"Keep it," Hannibal says, marking something on a paper he's printed out." You'll need to continue applying it while you gather these," he says handing Will the paper. "A customer just ordered them. The ones I've marked are in a secured area but the remainder can be found on the shelves," he says smiling at a private joke.

Will takes the paper and studies it. "*This looks hard*," he thinks. "How will I know which section to look in?" Will asks.

"I'll help you," Hannibal says, not mentioning that his barcode inventory system tells him the exact location of each and every title in "The Mind Palace."

Hannibal wants Will to learn how his store is arranged the old fashioned way; through exploration and discovery. If he's lucky Will won't notice the little, removable labels right

away, but if he does, he'll lie about their efficacy.

"Think of it as a scavenger hunt," Hannibal suggests and points to the list. "For example, where you do suppose number three would be located?"

"The Haunted Bookshop," Will reads and looks quizzically up at Hannibal, "Do you have a ghost story section?" He asks.

Hannibal chuckles when Will falls for his little trap. "Close," he says. "Look in the "Literature" or "Mystery" sections first, then search by the author's name."

"Okay," Will says, grinning for the first time since his arrival and Hannibal's heart feels all the lighter for it.

"Good," he says, "Let's reopen."

Chapter End Notes

Poor Nash :-(Hannibal can be such an evil SOB.

Poor Will- puberty sucks!!!

Horeunge=Bastard/child of a prostitude"-(source): BlueEyedNightwing
Baryl- " If used ind a good way it's when a boy is whitty, smart or acting like a idiot but in a sweet young way:)"- (source): BlueEyedNightwing

Basse="A cake and a Comicbook. Its a fluffe/sweet/cute nickname for small children"-(source): BlueEyedNightwing

Thanks again for your assistance :-)

Family Ties

Chapter Summary

Hannibal prepares for Nigel's visit and Will and his father discover they have grown apart .
Will comes up with a scheme called " Get dad laid"

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Well, I've been afraid of changing
'Cause I've built my life around you
But time makes you bolder
Even children get older
And I'm getting older too
Oh, I'm getting older too. -"Landslide"

Two hours later and Will has found all but one of the items listed.

Lavinia had arrived soon after he'd begun and immediately sequestered herself with Hannibal behind the counter. From his location in the stacks, Will hears their voices, low and urgent, but can't make out what they're saying.

"*Talking about Richard,"* Will thinks with a sinking heart and is caught staring openly at them.

Hannibal looks irritated and waves his hand at Will in a shooing motion but Lavinia waves and winks.

Embarrassed, Will looks back down at the shelf.

He's trying to find a tiny pamphlet amongst a large collection and it's proving elusive. He still doesn't understand why Hannibal doesn't figure-out a way of using the bar codes already affixed to every book.

"*Mr. Lecter says he hasn't found an app for that yet but I bet he's like dad and just doesn't know where to look,*" Will thinks with fine, Millennial scorn.

Then Will finds the thin little volume he's been searching for.

"*I found it*!" He thinks, feeling like Charlie with his Golden Ticket.

Grinning from ear to ear he hurries over to Hannibal and Lavinia. "I did it!" He crows.

Lavinia and Hannibal eye one another; then Lavinia breaks out into merry laugher and even Hannibal is grinning with amusement.

Will scowls.

"What!?" He demands hotly.

"We're sorry Will," Lavinia says appeasingly. "It's just that Mr. Lecter has been rather puckish about this list of his."

"You did very well," Hannibal counters, looking reprovingly at Lavinia who giggles like a white-haired girl as she gathers up the order. "Ms. Greene has an odd sense of humor. Don't pay her any attention," Hannibal tells Will resolving to explain the barcode system at a later time.

"That's true," Lavinia shoots back then quickly sobers. "But I'm so sorry about your loss Hannibal. Poor man. And poor Nash. What a horrible thing to happen. I'm so glad you have Will here to fill-in the void," Lavinia says and Will's guilty conscience reminds him of his recent hard-on.

"Yes, Will is proving to be a great comfort," Hannibal agrees, putting an arm around Will's shoulders and pulling him affectionately to his side.

Will's stomach swoops as he's pressed against Hannibal muscled body, close enough to smell the clean floral notes of his cologne and feel the man's warmth through their clothes. He ducks his head and wills his body to relax.

"When do I get to meet your father? I've heard so many nice things about him," Lavinia asks.

Next to him, Hannibal tenses and quickly releases Will from the embrace.

Instantaneously, Will's empathy provides him with a shocking insight. He looks up to see if Hannibal's emotions are mirrored on his face.

Sure enough, Hannibal is looking abashed as he shoots Lavinia a dirty look.

Will's mouth drops. "*She's teasing Mr. Lecter for...for having a crush on dad?!"*

Will is simultaneously grossed-out...and jealous.

Laughing roguishly Lavinia tries and fails to appear innocent as Hannibal busies himself with papers.

"*Dad's not gay! I wonder...*"

"Could you get the door for me?"

Lavinia's voice breaks into Will's train of thought. She's waiting for him by the entrance, heavily burdened with the boxed order.

Will hurries to open it for her.

Lavinia looks over to where Hannibal is engrossed at his computer. "Does your father..." She begins.

"My dad likes women!" Will blurts out peevishly and from the corner of his eye he sees Hannibal turn their way.

"Forgive me Will," Lavinia says, her keen eyes softening at the boy's perceived distress. "Mr. Lecter is a gentleman. He would never place your father in an uncomfortable position," she says and Will winches at her unintentional double entendre.

"Okay, okay, I get it!" He says irritably, hoping she'll just shut up already and Lavinia surprises him with one of her rippling laughs.

"Good! And if I don't see you before then, have a Happy Easter and enjoy your break!" She says. "Goodbye Hannibal!" She calls and he nods and waves.

Wills sighs with relief when the door closes behind her.

"A little of Lavinia goes a long way," Hannibal remarks dryly.

"She's whack!" Will says. "*First Nash, then my boner, and now...Mr. Lecter and my dad?!* " Will's head is spinning from everything that has happened.

"Oh, yes! Completely 'whack'!" Hannibal agrees and Will laughs.

"Now, since we have no customers at the moment, let's get you home."

"Okay," Will says feeling happier at the thought of riding in Hannibal's car because it smells like him, only more concentrated.

"***No!*** *Don't think like that,*" he scolds himself as he waits for Hannibal to lock up.

But Will's resolve to avoid thinking sexy thoughts about Hannibal is tenuous at best. Held hostage by his hormonal urges, Will's brain continues to spin image after image of a tanned, shirtless Hannibal in various compromising positions.

"I bet I'll be thinking of Mr. Lecter in the shower tonight," Will thinks then begins to panic as yet again his penis becomes hard.

"Ready!" Hannibal says, feeling pity for the boy who's been tormented recently by a stream of unwanted erections.

"*It's like being with Nigel all over again,"* he thinks, jingling his keys while Will sprints ahead.

"*I wonder what set the boy off this time. Nigel used to claim even the wallpaper could make him, liderlig,*" Hannibal reminisces, blissfully unaware that he is "ground zero" of Will Graham's latest crush.

Hannibal takes advantage of Holy Week to close the bookstore and prepare for his brother's upcoming visit.

Hannibal doesn't speculate what brings Nigel to his city. It is enough that his twin understands Hannibal's new life must be protected at all costs. Failure to do will result in a swift, brutal punishment.

"*Nigel would not hesitate to serve the same dish to me,"* Hannibal thinks.

As always, preparing for Nigel's visit consists mainly of stocking-up on high-end liquor, cigarettes, and hearty meal plans. But it also necessitates locking away valuables and those souvenirs from Hannibal's past he prefers to keep hidden. Hannibal also makes certain to switch-out the guest room's exquisite furnishings for items manufactured of sterner stuff.

"*It's like childproofing for a visit from the oldest, most dangerous baby imaginable*," he thinks while locking away his gun collection in his safe.

The last time Nigel stayed at Hannibal's he'd left behind a swathe of destruction: ten smashed crystal rock glasses, a broken bathroom vanity, and countless cigarette burns in a Charlotte Thomas duvet and two Turkish rugs.

"*What he did to my home was almost worse than what he didn't do in Paris. And his sloppy work there meant I was forced to waste an hour with that Kraftidiot of a Parisian detective*."

"*Nigel is getting lazy,"* Hannibal concludes and smiles at the little punishment he plans to met-out to his twin upon his arrival.

"The *Åndsbolle will see how it feels to spend a day on the commode shitting his guts out*," Hannibal thinks vindictively.

He hums happily thinking about the altered and decanted claret waiting on a sideboard for his brother's celebratory toast.

"*Though it could serve just as well as a reprimand for all the cigarette burns he left on my property. Maybe I should just take off another finger tip and be done with it*," he muses as he extracts several bottles of champagne and brandy from his wine cellar shelves.

"*You, my dears shall not be disappearing down my little brother's tattooed gullet,"* he promises and carries them upstairs to be added to his safe's growing cache.

While Hannibal prepares for Nigel's unwanted visit, Will and Frank are spending their holiday visiting animal shelters and exploring the city.

Their prolonged time together has been an eye-opening experience for both father and son. For Frank especially, there are times when Will is barely recognizable as the little boy he raised.

The most marked change in Will is that he barely talks to Frank.

Frank finds he misses the long, complicated stories and cozy bedtime confidences they once shared.

Then there's the fact that, if permitted Will would spend half the day sleeping and the other half locked in their small bathroom.

"Horny and ornery," is how Frank would describe his son these days, though he'd never say it to Will's face.

However, Frank would be the first to admit parenting a teen is not all horrible.

On the positive side, Will is more assured these days. Frank wonders whether that's due to his job, new school, or just living in a city.

"*Maybe all three*," he hypothesizes.

But whatever the underlying causes, Will surprises Frank daily with his insights and abilities. Teenager Will can be an enjoyable companion- when the mood strikes him.

"*He's a good boy,"* Frank thinks fondly one afternoon while Will pursues the movies offered at the bargain theater.

"There's nothing good out," Will concludes.

"A'right. Should we build the new B24?" Frank asks.

Will makes a face. "I don't really want to make models anymore, dad. I'm just going to go read," he says.

"You don't want to play a game?" Frank calls at his son's retreating back.

"Not now," comes the faint response before the bedroom door clicks shut.

Frank walks to their small window and looks out at the grimy brick building next to them. He sighs without realizing it.

As he stares out, the red of the brick morphs into a dusty, red dirt road lined with saplings and wild blackberry bushes. Happily, Frank walks along the road until he comes to his home, his real home, nestled amongst magnolia trees.

He leaves the road to step onto the grass. It's early morning in Frank's mindscape so his shoes are immediately saturated from walking in the the long, dewy grass.

"I need to mow," he thinks as he walks past the house and on towards the back yard.

A neighbor's cow pokes an inquisitive head over the wire fence and Frank obligingly gives its bony forehead a scratch.

Hambone appears, alive and full of vim and races ahead.

Frank sprints after him.

Here in his mindscape Frank is always whole and hearty.

Frank reaches the swinging bench, "our bench," he corrects himself, and sits down, setting it in motion with one foot.

Hambone sprawls on the wet grass searching for fleas.

"It seems like years since Will and I sat here and talked about the move and fireflies," he thinks as he rocks.

The sun is high enough now to reach the leaves of the volunteer plum trees and it turns their ripe fruit to glowing garnets.

Hambone runs off in pursuit of a squirrel.

Frank sighs.

In place of the verdant greens of his yard he's back in his shabby apartment looking out a small window at a dirty building.

He turns and walks slowly over to his father's easy chair and sinks down into its comforting familiarity.

"*Looking back ain't gonna help,"* he reproves himself and glances down at the stack of discarded magazines Hannibal sent home with Will home.

Frank grabs the first "Scientific American" he sees and flips through it until he finds something of interest.

Soon, he is contentedly absorbed in an article.

Inside his room, Will is attempting to read an assigned book while watching YouTube videos at the same time.

Although he feels a little guilty for blowing off his dad, Will believes he deserves a break from Frank.

It's surprising how irritating his dad has become during Will's vacation.

"*The more I'm with him, the worse he gets. It's the exact opposite of how it is when I'm with Mr. Lecter,*" he thinks flipping to the end of The Giver to see what happens.

He reads the last three pages then tosses it onto his desk.

"*I wonder what Mr. Lecter is doing right now,"* he thinks. *"I still need to tell him not to tell dad about me. I was going to ask him but then Nash freaked out and I had to work, and forgot about it. Mr. Lecter's weird, but he's cool...and hot... even though he's old*."

Will wonders if Hannibal has replaced Richard yet and if so, what the new man is like, "*I wonder if he has a type*."

This last thought leads him inevitably to thoughts concerning Hannibal and his own father.

"*Dad's good looking, but he's such a slob. I can't believe Hannibal is even interested. Besides, is his gaydar not working? Can't he tell by just talking to him?* "

Not for the first time, Will wonders what his dad engages in behind closed doors. " *What* ***does*** *he do? Jack himself in the shower, watch porn?"* Will postulates finding both concepts equally disturbing.

"*Why doesn't dad date? I mean he hasn't since mom left."*

Will wonders, about all this and more, but he knows he will never drum up enough courage to speak to Frank about any of it.

"But Lavinia would!"

Will sits up when this brainwave hits.

"Operation:"Get Dad Laid!," he thinks cringing and giggling at the same time.

Will tiptoes out his door and down the short hallway. He spies his dad reading a magazine and lounging in Grandpa Graham's easy chair.

Will grins at Frank's slovenly appearance.

"*Begin firing sequence*," he thinks, *"three...two...one."*

Fire!

"Hey dad!" Will says and Frank looks up.

"Let's go get haircuts. I know a really cheap place. My treat."

The Saturday the store re-opens, Will arrives at work with his father in tow, Frank having expressed a desire to meet Lavinia and check-in on Nash.

Hannibal notices Will has been monitoring his interactions with Frank with a hawk-like intensity ever since the pair set foot in his store.

"*I blame Lavinia for this. The boy thinks I'm going to make unwanted sexual advances to his father. Too bad that would be a fruitless endeavor*," Hannibal thinks appreciating Frank's fresh haircut and neatened appearance.

And Hannibal isn't Frank's only admirer.

When Lavinia is introduced to Will's father, her eyes crinkle and an impish smile plays around her lips.

"It's so nice to meet you Frank! I have to be honest...if this were thirty years ago, I would be giving you a run for your money!" She jokes as she shakes his hand.

All the adults laugh and Will pretends to dry heave.

"Gross!" Will thinks rolling his eyes. He needs to speak with Lavinia privately, but since that's not currently possible, he wanders over to where Nash is listlessly sweeping the floor.

"Hi Nash, you want some help?" Will asks.

Nash shakes his head and begins to cry.

Lavinia hurries to the staffroom kitchenette to make Nash a cup of tea while Frank goes over and hugs him.

"Hang in there buddy, it's going to get easier," Frank says and sits with Nash until Lavinia returns with his mug.

Will knows that Hannibal is concerned for Nash as well. He hears him tell Lavinia something that sounds like "Richard's estate" and Frank looks their way.

"Physically, his needs will be met," Hannibal is saying quietly. " Emotionally..." Hannibal raises his hands helplessly.

Lavinia looks sadly from Nash to Hannibal to Will. Even Frank looks grim and Will feels the weight of the adult's misgivings.

"Can Nash and I go on break Mr. Lecter?" Will asks loudly and the grownups all look at him in surprise.

"What, both of you at the same time?" Hannibal asks.

"I want to get him some ice cream," Will says, feeling uncomfortable with so many eyes on him. "Just don't make a big deal about it," he pleads in an undertone to Frank who is beaming with pride.

"Daaad!" Will grouses and Frank manages to finally wipe the smile off his face.

"All right then. Go have fun," says Hannibal.

Will turns to Nash who puts his mug down and looks challengingly back at him.

"I don't want ice cream!" Nash says petulantly.

Will's wracks his young mind for an alternative idea. Suddenly, making Nash happy is the most important thing in the world.

"What about donuts?" Will asks, and then remembers too late the connection between Richard and donuts.

"No!! Wait!!! Frozen yogurt with all the toppings!"

Nash's eyes narrow.

"With gummy worms?" He asks suspiciously.

"Uh huh, and M&Ms, and Nerds, whatever you want!" Will smiles triumphantly; he already knows he's won this battle.

Nash smiles back; it's a wan, sad little thing, but it it's a smile nonetheless, and seeing it, Lavinia places her hand on Frank's arm.

"First time in almost two weeks," she says softly.

The adults watch silently as Will retrieves Nash's windbreaker and helps him into it; zipping up the zipper and adjusting the hood.

When Nash is ready, Will holds out his hand. Nash stares at it with a puzzled look before taking it gingerly into his own.

Inexplicably, Will no longer cares if people on the street stare or tease him for holding hands with Nash.

"We're friends," Nash says squeezing Will's hand painfully.

"Always," Will confirms.

He looks over at Hannibal to see if he understands and Hannibal nods.

Will smiles and nods back.

Hannibal gets it.

"We're going to be okay Nash," he promises as he opens the door.

"Okay," Nash says, not understanding the deeper meaning."I bet I can eat more yogurt than you!"

Will laughs happily. "We'll just see about that!" he says and shuts the door behind them.

Chapter End Notes

Just to be clear- Will is not setting Frank up with Lavinia- he thinks of her as a matchmaker. Lavinia is essentially the "sassy best friend" in this story since Beverly isn't here to do it for her.

Åndsbolle=Dimwit.
Kraftidiot=Asshole
gaydar-the ability to recognize homosexuals through observation or intuition (Will is not PC)
liderlig- horny
ground zero-: (in this case)
: the central point in an area of fast change or intense activity

Doppelgänger

Chapter Summary

Will enlists Lavinia's help and later meets Nigel

Chapter Notes

I'll be on vacation for the next two weeks so I wanted to post a little update to keep this story moving forward.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Author's Note: If you have a hankering for well written "Lecter Twin" fics which are also filled with porny -goodness- then run -don't walk to : DarkmoonSigel and sku7314977 whose collaborative and independent works can be found in the Lecter Twin Series

---

"You'd like me to set-up your father?" Lavinia drawls skeptically and it takes all of Will's will power not to roll his eyes at her.

"Yes, but they have to be WOMEN," he says snarkily.

Lavinia snorts and playfully punches his shoulder. "Snottiness will get you nowhere young man," she says and Will grins.

They're currently in the "back storage"; a tiny room off the garage Hannibal uses to process his stock. Will has been given a box of books to sort and asked for Lavinia's help as a cover.

"I should be getting paid for this," she gripes, sticking-out her tongue at a copy of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies as she tosses it into the trash can.

"Hey! You're not supposed to throw them away!" Will protests.

"Whoops! Guess my hand slipped!" Lavinia says unrepentantly.

"Well if he finds it, I'm telling," Will says. "So... do you know anyone?" He asks wincing when a batch of Twilight books are sacrificed to the literary *cenote*.

"I'll think about it. Does your father know what you're up to?" She asks, fairly certain of the answer.

"No! And you can't say anything! Promise!" Will demands.

"I *shawn't* say a thing. You *hawve* my word as a lady of quality," Lavinia trills in a fake Downton Abbey accent.

"Ugggg!" Will groans. "*Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all*," he thinks.

"Don't worry slugger," Lavinia says laughing right into Will's face. "Your secret is safe with me. I can already think of three lovely ladies who might be interested... we're not talking marriage here are we?" She adds facetiously.

"Kill me!" Will pleads and Lavinia cackles, adding seven copies of Fifty Shades of Grey to what she calls her "circular filing cabinet."

School begins the next morning and for the first time, Will is able to ride his new bike there.

Buying the used five speed had taken all of his savings, but it was worth it for the independence it grants him.

"*The best part of biking*," Will thinks, "*is that I don't need to walk past that storage place anymore. I don't ever have to see that asshole pimp or lie to dad,"* he thinks smugly as he reaches school and locks-up his bike.

It's the start of a new quarter and Will plans on continuing the routine he'd established before Easter break. Two days a week he'll study during lunch then spend the remaining three days hanging out in the game room.

Seeing the same people three times a week has gone a long way towards making friends and Will admits it's nice to see friendly faces as he walks down the hallways.

But, truth be told, there is really only one person Will has been looking forward to seeing.

Will hasn't seen Anthony since before Holy Week.

When he'd first noticed Anthony's absences he'd thought maybe Anthony had changed schools.

So it had come as a huge relief when he'd overheard a couple teachers discussing how, "Anthony Almirante's make-up work needs to be coordinated after his vacation."

Will doesn't know if Anthony is back yet, but then he spots him, his dark head looming above a sea of shorter students.

Will walks over to his locker and opens it, using its door as cover while he checks Anthony out.

Will's crush is surrounded by a group of girls all laughing and coquettishly tossing their hair.

Though he's jealous of the girls' behavior, Will understands the attraction. Anthony's skin is deeply tanned after his vacation, its burnished richness glows like mahogany under the fluorescent lights and sets-off the brilliancy of his light eyes.

"*Shoot me*," Will groans to himself when a pretty red head asks to see "the gun show." Her friends squeal and giggle when Anthony obligingly flexes his biceps and the girl boldly squeezes one.

"**Miss Moore! Mr. Almirante**! "A voice like the trump of doom sounds down the crowded hallway.

Sister Clément, the head of the music department has appeared out of nowhere and the crowd parts for her.

"Go to class!" She orders the onlookers and along with the other rubberneckers, Will reluctantly prepares to leave.

"Go to the office and wait for me, " she says to the malefactors.

" No, not together," she clarifies." Miss Moore will be walking ahead with me and Mr. Almirante may follow behind."

Will smirks as the teacher stomps away with the girl in tow; his competition looking like she is fighting tears.

Will's class is in the opposite direction of the office, but before he leaves, he can't help looking back one last time.

Anthony is standing in the same spot but now he's staring right at Will.

"*Oh shit,"* Will thinks as his stomach turns into a butterfly mosh pit. He smiles back at Anthony shaking his head in a display of mocking disapproval.

Anthony's eyes light up and he flashes Will a smile which does dangerous things to the boy's insides.

Anthony mutely raises his hands and shrugs as if to say, "*What can I say? I'm too hot for my own good!"*

Will laughs and turns the corner. Even if Anthony is sent home for the rest of the day, it was worth it for this one, brief encounter.

"*Oh, man. He's so fucking cute. What am I going to do?* " He thinks as he robotically walks to his next class.

All the rest of the day, Will savors the image of Anthony's face, like a sweet, until the last bell rings and he's finally set free.

Will is so excited to show Hannibal and Nash his new bike that he races it all the way to work then pushes it straight through the front entrance of "The Mind Palace."

"WE'RE CLOSED! GET THE FUCK OUT!" Hannibal's voice roars as soon as Will clears the entranceway.

Startled, Will's grip loosens and the bike falls against him.

"Closed!" Hannibal's voice sounds again and now Will sees where it's coming from.

Hannibal is reclining on one easy chair while his feet rest on another. He is surrounded by a thick cloud of cigarette smoke and through its haze Will can make out his sour expression; his emotions feel even worse.

"*Is that...is that Mr. Lecter?*" Will thinks confusedly.

"Christ! Can't you read signs, kid? We're closed! So get the hell out!" Hannibal barks.

But Will is frozen, too scared to make a move.

Hannibal stares at him for a moment then vaults up from his seat cringing slightly as he holds his stomach before coming to stand menacingly in front of him.

Will's eyes bulge with fear and his mouth drops open as he cowers against his bike. This close, Hannibal doesn't even look like himself.

"*Orphan Black*!" Will thinks and whimpers.

"Please tell me you're not another one!" Hannibal snarls and Will's eyes fill with tears.

Hannibal is mad at both him and Nash but Will has no idea why.

"*Where is Nash?"* Will thinks quickly darting his eyes around the room."*He should be here!"*

Hannibal drops his cigarette to the ground and grinds the glowing end with his boot heel.

"Boots?! " Will thinks with confusion.

Hannibal studies Will for a moment before mockingly letting his mouth fall open and his tongue loll out.

Will closes his mouth with a snap of his jaws.

"Do...you...understand...English?" Hannibal asks, anger replaced with irritated bemusement.

"What?" Will asks stupidly.

"*Maybe Mr. Lecter has multiple personalities like in a movie!"* He thinks and a tingle of fear tickles the nape of his neck.

A stream of foreign words pours from Hannibal's mouth and the tears welling in Will's eyes begin to stream down his face.

"Fuck! Don't cry kid, just leave!" Hannibal exclaims with growing desperation.

Will drops his head and struggles to push his bike backwards. Of course the wheels lock, and Will looks up, wild-eyed at the man, too frightened to turn his back in order to wheel it around.

Hannibal sighs and quickly fortifies himself with another cigarette.

Will watches the operation with astonishment." *Mr. Lecter hates smokers!"*

"You can't make it go backwards like that!" Hannibal says, his voice rich with amusement as he blows a perfect smoke ring.

Will watches the ring float up and dissipate, distracted for the moment by the oddity.

Hannibal sighs and smiles with renewed good humor.

"*The nicotine must be helping,"* Will theorizes.

"Here... let me help you, *hvalp*!" Hannibal says and grabs the bike to lift it.

Will's throat tightens from both the smoke and the endearment.

"Will!"

Will could swear he hears his name being called as he ducks his head and backs up against the door to avoid the bike's wheels.

Hannibal sets the bike down on the rubber mat then unceremoniously grabs Will to move him away from the door.

"**Nigel!"** bellows a voice sounding so much like Hannibal's that Will cranes his neck to see where it's coming from.

But Will's view remains blocked by Hannibal whom he now sees is sporting a large tattoo on his neck.

Will forgets all about the voice with this new, shocking revelation.

Smiling expectantly as he watches Will's face, Hannibal releases the boy and lets the bike fall to the ground.

Will gasps and raises his hands defensively.

Mr. Lecter has obviously gone crazy.

"**WILL!**"

Will's head snaps in the direction of the voice and sees...Mr. Lecter; five feet away and closing-in fast. He is fuming with anger.

"Normal Hannibal" strides right-up to "Tattoo-Hannibal" and stares confrontationally at him.

"Mr...Mr. Lecter?" Will stutters in a tiny voice looking back and forth between the two men.

Mr. Lecter-who-isn't-Mr. Lecter smirks devilishly down at him as he takes a deep drag off his cigarette and extends his right hand.

"Will, is it? The pleasures all mine. Nigel Lecter," he says blowing smoke over Will's head as he laughs.

Chapter End Notes

No disrespect to the books tossed in the trash- I haven't read any of them, but my mom- being a Austenphile- acted like a crazy person once when she saw "Pride and Prejudice Zombies" in a bookstore .

cenote- a natural pit, or sinkhole, resulting from the collapse of limestone bedrock that exposes groundwater underneath. cenotes were sometimes used by the ancient Maya for sacrificial offerings

circular filing cabinet-garbage can

F'ing Nigel

Chapter Summary

Will's impression of Nigel isn't a good one, Hannibal is forced to make a hard decision.

Chapter Notes

Angst!
I'm sorry!! Gotta keep little Will away from Nigel!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will looks down at Nigel's strong, callused hand for a moment before ignoring it completely and turning towards Hannibal.

Inwardy, Hannibal flinches; Will's sweet, blue eyes are dark with righteous indignation.

"Where...is...Nash," Will growls into Hannibal's surprised face.

"I took him home...Will, I didn't..."

"Save it," Will spits out and reaches down to grab his bike. He feels tears of anger and shame beginning to well and he isn't going to give the asshole blocking his way the satisfaction of watching him cry.

Large, roughened hands cover his own and prevent him from moving.

Will manages to pull his hands away and the bike tips sideways.

"**Leave me the fuck alone**!" Will shouts up into Nigel's amused face.

Never taking his eyes off Will, Nigel leans back against the door and speaks rapid fire Danish over the boy's head.

Will gamely attempts to hold back the fear which is beginning to creep past the barriers in his mind He bends down to pull his bike upright.

" *Basse*," Hannibal's voice is low and soothing.

Nigel snorts, and Will's lip curls; he's never hated anyone so much as he hates this mocking, taunting man.

"Will, please, wait. I can explain," Hannibal says, putting a tentative hand onto Will's shoulder.

Will looks down at the manicured hand lightly touching him and Hannibal quickly withdraws it.

Mutely Will clutches his bike and shakes his head. He needs to get out of here.

Now.

A second, fiery conversation goes on over his head as his path remains blocked; he can't move through or around the two men.

Frantically he searches the store for an ally, but it appears deserted.

"**Move!"** He yells at Nigel whose mouth drops open at the kid's audacity; the lit cigarette dangles there, threatening to fall.

Nigel leers as he saves his cigarette but otherwise doesn't move.

"Nigel, move away so he can pass!" Hannibal barks and Will starts at the ferocity in his voice.

"Will, this wasn't a trick," Hannibal says, in a modulated voice. He's worried about the boy's frantic expression as he scrabbles at the door handle.

Nigel sneers at his brother and challengly blows a mouthful of smoke into his face. Shocked, Will looks over his shoulder to see Hannibal's reaction.

Hannibal's eyes have gone dead as he studies his brother.

"*Oh, shit!"* Will thinks, pulling frantically at the door which knocks into Nigel as it opens.

Luckily for Will however, Nigel barely glances his way; it appears he's decided to disengage from the conflict by sauntering away to drape himself across the nearest armchair.

"Will, please, just let me explain. Nigel and I weren't playing a joke on you. It was an accident that he was here when you came."

Hannibal is stumbling over his words in his eagerness, his accent noticeably thicker.

Will knows that the man's regret is genuine but his bruised ego is twisting in agony, screaming at him to "get out, ***get out***, **GET OUT**!"

A little whimper of distress escapes his throat before he can suppress it and he immediately shoots a glance over at Nigel; daring him to mock.

But Nigel is stretched-out across a large, stuffed chair, his shaggy head resting on the seat back while his long legs dangle over the armrest, completely ignoring them. His eyes are closed; face blissfully serene as he puffs on his cigarette.

"Hope he gets lung cancer," Will mutters vindictively.

"Ignore him," Hannibal says and Will shoots him a look Hannibal interprets as, "Easy for you to say!"

"He's my little brother but he's not the brightest bulb in the box," Hannibal whispers conspiratorially scornfully rolling his eyes in Nigel's direction.

Though Will's heart is hammering in his chest and his eyes are brimming with tears, the insult makes him laugh and Hannibal breathes a sigh of relief.

"Let's go out into the yard," Hannibal suggests gently, placing his hands onto the bike's handlebars. "You can bring this with you if you'd like," he says, sending a look over at his brother's recumbent form as if to intimate the bike isn't safe with him.

Will laughs again at the innuendo but a few tears shake loose from his lashes and course down his cheek. He quickly wipes them, not looking at Hannibal as he pushes his bike along.

Hannibal walks alongside Will, serving as a buffer between the boy and Nigel until they are finally outside.

They reach the brick yard and stand in awkward silence until Hannibal suggests they sit down.

"I don't want to," Will says defiantly, he can't bear the thought of being close enough to Hannibal that his boss can see the traces of his babyish tears.

"Alright," Hannibal says evenly. "But I believe I will sit."

Hannibal unbuttons his suit jacket and sits down on a wicker garden chair.

Will stands a few feet away, under the canopy of a large tree, clutching his bike.

"Why did Nash go home? Was it because Nigel was mean to him?" Will demands.

Hannibal brushes a piece of imaginary lint off his pants as he considers his answer.

"Nash asked Nigel to extinguish his cigarette and Nigel...said a few things which upset Nash, " Hannibal admits, rubbing his hands together and looking meditatively down at his shiny shoes.

"Who could be mean to Nash?!" Will protests. " He's re..." Will stops himself but they both know what he was going to say.

"Nigel's manners can be very uncouth. I never thought he would be mixing either with the customers or my employees," Hannibal says flashing Will a look of regret.

The knot in Will's stomach finally begins to loosen.

Silently he pushes his bike's kickstand down and goes to sit on the chair opposite Hannibal's.

The look of happy relief on Hannibal's face isn't lost on Will and he flushes with confusion; Hannibal cares how he feels.

"That's ok," he says gruffly. "But why is he here?" He asks, with childish loathing. He absentmindedly begins picking at the chair's woven armrest.

"Please don't pick at that," Hannibal says automatically. "Its mid-century modern and older than both of us put together."

Will rolls his eyes but stops picking.

"Thank you. Now to answer your question, Nigel is here on business and I've invited him to spend a few weeks in my guest room."

"Why doesn't he stay in a hotel?" Will asks. "Is he too poor or too cheap?"

Hannibal's eyes crinkle at the boy's comment but he shakes his head. "Neither, but he does appreciate the style in which I live."

"Where does he come from?" Will asks, drumming his feet against the ground while tapping his fingers against the chair's arm.

Hannibal finds the sounds and movements distracting but forbears to comment. "He moves around quite a bit for business, but for the most part he lives on the Continent."

"Which continent?" Will wonders.

"Europe," Hannibal says, smiling.

"Oh..." Will falls silent then looks with concern back at the store.

"Aren't you worried about him smoking in there? Or attacking the customers?" He asks.

Hannibal looks surprised.

"Attacking customers? Why would he do that?" He asks while thinking acerbically to himself, "*He'd better not."*

"He's a criminal, isn't he?" Will blurts-out.

Hannibal's body and emotions go deathly still, like he's been dipped into ice water.

Hannibal curses the boy's insight.

One careless comment like that to a teacher or Frank could spell the end of Hannibal's neatly orchestrated life here.

Hannibal is forced to make a swift and unsavory decision.

"William..." he begins and Will frowns at the formality.

"I'm very sorry...but I think it would be best for everyone, if you stop working here," he says, avoiding the boy's eyes.

Will feels like Hannibal has smacked him across the face.

"Why!?" He asks, his chest beginning to heave. He can't stop his lips from trembling so he folds them into his mouth to hide them.

Hannibal looks into the boy's anguished face, feeling like he's breaking-up with a lover; though none of his boyfriends ever looked as shattered as Will does now.

"I'm sorry Will," Hannibal says. "You have the wrong idea about my brother and I don't think you should be around each other."

"I'm sorry!" Will squeaks-out hoping an apology will allow Hannibal to change his mind. "Besides, he's not going to be here forever!" He protests.

"Thank you for the apology," Hannibal says forcing himself to remain cool and detached. "But it doesn't change the fact that my brother and I have reputations in the business community which could be irrevocably damaged by innuendo and gossip."

Will may not understand every word, but he clearly understands enough;his look of hurt astonishment rebukes Hannibal, who forces himself to stand firm.

His personal interests must be protected at all costs.

Will knows he should act like a man and just walk away but his body is frozen. Worse still, his face feels red-hot and more tears are threatening.

He manages to get to his feet and numbly walks to where his bike waits.

Will shoves the kickstand up and pushes his bike towards the locked back gate. His vision is blurring now so he blinks rapidly while Hannibal hastily unlocks the padlock and swings the door open.

Will pushes his bike through and shakily mounts it, not bothering with his helmet.

Hannibal wonders if he should insist he wear it.

Will sits with downturned eyes.

"You lied when you said we were friends," Will says in a dull, pain-filled voice.

Hannibal opens his mouth to defend himself but closes it again.

Will looks at him.

"Go to hell," he says quietly and pushes off to coast wobbly down the sidewalk before finally entering traffic and becoming lost to sight.

Hannibal stands at the gate staring after him until he smells, rather than senses Nigel's presence behind him.

"What the fuck was that all about, p*ikhoved*?" He asks.

"Not now, Nigel," Hannibal says harshly.

He closes and relocks the gate.

Nigel studies his twin then shrugs. Personal experience, has taught him not to poke his brother when he's in one of his 'moods.'

"Come on, let's go inside and I'll pour you a drink," Nigel says.

Hannibal shoots a quizzical look at his brother.

"You should have stayed in the store," he notes sourly. "We're still open."

Nigel just stares and blows a puff of smoke over his own shoulder.

Hannibal glares at his brother then strides away, his back ramrod straight.

Nigel flips the bird to the retreating figure.

"*Please tell me he's not fucking that kid*," he thinks, flicking his half-smoked cigarette to the ground and grinding it out.

"*Fuck, Hanni and I used to fucking destroy people who did that kind of shit, just for laughs*," he thinks.

"*Fuck! Those were good times!"* He thinks, smiling with nostalgia as he fumbles with his pack of smokes and lights a fresh one.

Nigel strolls from the side yard back out to Hannibal's furnished patio.

"Shit...I have no clue what the fucker is into these days...he could have a fucking dungeon in this brick mausoleum for all I know," he muses.

Nigel pauses, looking with distain at the artful arrangement of outdoor furniture and decor; there's even a chandelier hanging from the branches of an oak tree.

"Christ hanging on the fucking cross," he pontificates while shaking his head.

He snorts derisively and drops his still-lit cigarette onto the teak tabletop; then he scans the property.

"*Good, secure ten- foot fence, gated driveway, large garage*," he thinks taking inventory and walks over to inspect Hannibal's outbuildings.

Hannibal's garage is unlocked and Nigel sticks his head in.

Hannibal's pretentious estate car is parked there along with a work bench and seasonal odds and ends. He closes the door to the garage and enters the room Hannibal briefly labeled as his "back storage." Two large refractory tables, shelving full of paperback books, and a sink fill the diminutive space.

"*Fucker sorts his shit out here,"* Nigel surmises then notes with interest the large drain set into the flagstone floor.

"*Hmmm...useful*," he thinks.

He runs his hands over the smooth, surfaces of the tables. "*This could work,"* he reflects and rewards himself with a cigarette.

"*Need to replenish my supply*," he thinks when he frees the last cigarette from its box. "*And I'm getting hungry. I probably shit-out my last three meals with whatever that fucker dosed me with. When does Hanni close this shit box anyway? Maybe I have time for a BJ before we sit down to a nice meal 'en famille.' "*

Nigel regains his equanimity at the thought of deep-throating a prostitute.

"Let Hanni have his little fuck boys," he thinks. "*I'm in the fucking US of A and I'm ready for a woman."*

He tosses the empty cigarette wrapper onto the floor and runs his fingers through his long, ash-blond hair. "*I'll tell the whores I'm a surfer,"* he thinks, walking back through the yard and into the house. "*Whores love surfers,*" he laughs, his good humor completely restored.

"Hanni! Where the fuck do you keep your condoms?" He calls and smiles waggishly at an old man Hannial is busy assisting.

"Sorry gramps, just ignore me," Nigel says and the man turns quickly away. " Unless of course you have a couple Viagra on you that I could bum?" Nigel adds hopefully, "I have big plans...if you catch my meaning!"

Chapter End Notes

Why is Nigel so interested in Hannibal's storage facility?

First Kiss

Chapter Summary

With whom will Will experience his first kiss?
A. Hannibal
B. Anthony
C. Little Red-Haired Girl

Also- just FYI- there is going to be no "gay-bashing" in this story cuz I'm a delicate flower who can't handle that shit- especially when kids are involved.

Chapter Notes

Will has been having a hard time of it * author waves hand* hope this makes up for it!

And for all of you who predicted a confrontation between Frank and the Lecters- nope- Will is too smart to allow that to happen- good guess though!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will bikes blindly for blocks until he realizes he's returned to his school.

"Shit," he says, and skids to a halt. "*Not that it matters. I don't want to go home yet anyway*," he thinks and slowly begins to bike around the perimeter of the walled playground

"Get that bike off the sidewalk!" An old man walking two barking dog yells, and Will bites back a curse.

"Whatever," he mumbles and rides past him. Will continues along the sidewalk until he reaches the only unlocked gate and heads inside.

Even at this hour, the school yard is far from deserted. A color guard is practicing their routines and the garden club is meeting, chattering as they weed.

A group of boys Will's age have just finished a game of pick-up basketball. As he rides nearer, a few whip past him on bikes or waveboards.

"*Thank God*," Will thinks when he sees that none of them are Anthony. Still, he doesn't want anyone to see his eyes swollen from crying and he's happy when they ignore him.

He wheels lazily around the blacktop, practicing sharp turns, wheelies, and riding without touching the handlebars.

The hour wears on and the color guard leaves. Then one by one the garden club packs-up and goes; padlocking the garden's gate behind them. The shadows are falling over the playground now and Will knows it's time to go home before the janitor locks the gates.

"**Will!"**

A boy's voice shouts causing Will to brake hard and look around.

Anthony and sister Clément are walking towards him. Will hears a low, scolding monologue as they approach.

Will dismounts and stands waiting.

"What are you doing here Mr. Graham?" Sister Clément demands.

"Anthony and I had planned to study for a History test, sister," Will fibs glibly.

Anthony grins and nods. "Guess we'll have to do it another day," he says attempting to sound disappointed.

"Go home Mr. Almirante and stay away from the young ladies or you will be suspended next time, " Sister says sharply and turns to Will. "You go home too, Mr. Graham. Mr. Frente has enough to worry about without students hanging around the grounds."

"Yes, sister, " the boys reply in unison and Sister Clément shakes her head and frowns, but Will knows it's just for show; she's always liked him.

"Humff," she says then turns to return to the building where her long-delayed dinner awaits her.

Will and Anthony smile at one another then begin to walk towards the gate.

"Nice," Anthony says as he examines the bike between them. "Five speed?" He asks.

"Yeah, I don't really need more," Will says and falls silent. Anthony is watching him as they walk and he hopes his face is back to normal by now.

"So...why are you here?" Anthony asks sounding hopeful.

"To wait for you of course...NOT!" Will says laughing. But the laugh dies in his throat because Anthony is looking at him without a trace of a smile.

"What?" Will says though he already knows what is going on in Anthony's head and his stomach flips with excitement. They're just passing the alcove that houses the locked bathrooms when Anthony casually places his hand over Will's on the handlebar.

"Are you going home?" Anthony asks quietly. "*Tenderly,"* is the word that comes to Will's mind, but he won't allow himself to think that. Then, suddenly, Anthony pushes Will sideways so they're sheltered in the alcove's cinderblock walls.

Wh..." Will says but Anthony's lips are on his now, warm and insistent and Will's truncated question is being answered in the best possible way.

Anthony pulls away, and for the first time, looks unsure of himself.

"Sorry," he says as Will stares up at him in shock. "It's just that I've been wanting to do that for a long time," he admits.

"That's okay," Will manages to say as arousal becomes stronger than surprise. "I'm glad you did," he whispers," but what if someone sees us?"

Anthony laughs, a low, sexy purr really, and rests his forehead against Will's. Will's penis jumps in response. "We're okay," Anthony whispers and tilts his head down for another kiss which Will eagerly meets half-way.

Will's whole body is a pulsing, tingling cacophony as his lips slide and meld with Anthony's. He doesn't realize his hands are clutching Anthony's shoulders until his own shoulders are grasped and he's pulled up against Anthony's chest. Even with the top tube of the bike's frame wedged between them, Will feels Anthony's erection pushing against his stomach, hard and huge. Then smooth, wet, flesh slips through Will's parted lips and their tongues are pushing against one another and Will is fully hard and starting to leak.

Panicked, he pushes back, breathing heavily and Anthony lets him go, a happy, lazy, smile on his face. They turn simultaneously in the direction of the church steeple when they hear the bell's mechanism beginning to whirl; the tune plays and the boys count the strikes.

"Seven o'clock," Will says adjusting himself through his slacks.

"Shit. I'll get my ass kicked if I get home too late," Anthony says, pulling a face, but he's grinning, and Will has a feeling Anthony gets away with far more at home than he lets on.

"I gotta go too," Will admits and grabs his bike to push it out of their hiding place.

Anthony helps him and soon they're walking across the blacktop side by side.

"Does anyone know...?" Will asks tentatively.

"That I'm gay?" Anthony replies.

Will blushes because said abruptly like that, it sounds like a rude question. "Yeah," he says, looking sideways at Anthony's face.

"Hell, no! I'm from a huge,Dominican, Catholic family," he says laughing, but he's too young to hide his fear and Will feels it like a sheet of ice down his back.

"Yeah," Will echoes softly and they walk for a while in silence.

"What about you?" Anthony asks, thinking how cute Will looks with his round, blue eyes and curly hair, although, right now, he looks about ten years old. "*Robbing the cradle*," Anthony thinks without irony.

"No, but my dad is cool with it," Will admits feeling guilty at the disparity of their situations.

"And your mom isn't?" Anthony asks with surprise, wishing he could lean over and kiss Will's plump, pink lips.

"My mom took off when I was a baby," Will says gauging Anthony's reaction.

"Oh, wow, sorry," Anthony says. "My mom's youngest brother did that a couple years ago. My aunt and her kids stayed with us. Worst...summer...ever!" Anthony says dramatically and Will laughs.

"Hey, wait a minute!" Anthony protests when they come to the first storefront. "Don't you work after school?"

Will's breath catches. He can't believe he'd actually forgotten about the shit storm that happened at "The Mind Palace."

"I got fired," Will admits hoping his confession makes him seem badass, rather than pathetic in Anthony's eyes.

Luckily for him, Anthony appears to think the former and whistles appreciably.

"Whad'ya do?" He asks smiling as he punches Will gently on the shoulder.

Will's bravado fades as the emotions of recent events engulf him. He turns away, forcing his eyes wide open so Anthony won't notice the tears in them. "Nothing, much, they're just assholes," Will says.

Anthony takes the hint and drops the topic.

"*Anyway*..." Anthony says and Will looks at him gratefully. "This is where I go," Anthony says indicating the opposite direction of Will's route.

"Okay," Will says a wave of sadness hitting him because *this* is ending.

"So about...us..." Anthony says looking hesitantly down at Will who flinches.

"I know! I know!" Will says, angrily and Anthony raises his palms appeasingly.

"Just making sure we're on the same page, man, don't flip your wig!" Anthony says smiling to take the sting out of his words.

"Flip your wig?" Will repeats scornfully.

"I heard it on TV," Anthony says defensively, punching Will again, but allowing his fingers to linger on Will's arm this time.

Will bites his lip as a tingle of arousal shoots through him.

"You watch *telenovelas*?" Will grins, already forgiving Anthony.

"Hey! Don't be racist man!" Anthony says, hitching his backpack up. "And don't watch my ass as I walk away either," he says softly into Will's ear before walking off.

"In your dreams!" Will yells, but the truth is, he can't tear his eyes off Anthony's shapely ass as he struts away.

Anthony looks over his shoulder and smirks knowingly. Shaking his head, Will mounts his bike and heads home.

From his vantage point on a brownstone porch, Hannibal watches as both boys leave the school grounds, walk together for a block, then finally part ways.

"*So that is the young man he wished to impress*," Hannibal thinks smiling as he watches Will turn his bike and ride in the direction of home.

Initially, after their confrontation, Hannibal had planned on calling Frank. He's glad now that he chose to monitor Will's whereabouts rather than needlessly alarm his father; it's clear to Hannibal that Will is safe.

"*He seems to be handling the firing remarkably well. That's the power of Forelsket,"* Hannibal muses recollecting Will's beaming face as he pedaled homeward. "*It's the best feeling in the world. Now...about my brother,* " Hannibal grimaces, switching mental gears and hurries home to see what Nigel has been up to in his absence.

"I'm home," Will yells unnecessarily as he closes the door of their tiny apartment.

"Hey there," Frank says, poking his head around the corner. "How was work?" He asks, thinking it must have been a good day if his son's face is any indicator.

"Oh! " Will says, and leans his bike against the wall. "Mr. Lecter didn't call?" He asks rapidly reviewing his options depending upon the answer.

"Nope. Why, should he have?" Frank asks walking back to the kitchen.

Will smells dinner cooking and his stomach lurches with hunger.

"Stir-fry?" He asks, coming into the kitchen and peering at the skillet. He grabs cutlery and two plates.

"Yup, a co-worker brought in zucchini from his garden to parcel-out so I helped myself," Franks says and hands Will two filled plates.

"Ugg...we always grew too much squash and zucchini," Will reminisces as he sets the plates on the table and Frank smiles at how talkative he is tonight.

"So...work was good?" Frank asks and is surprised when Will becomes sober.

"Mr. Lecter told me he doesn't need me anymore," Will says.

"Oh!" Frank says, grabbing his cane and walking to the table. "He pink-slipped you, did he?"

Will frowns thoughtfully. "I didn't see anything pink. He just told me he didn't need my help anymore," Will says hoping his fib will remain unchallenged.

"I see," Frank says simply but Will feels his father's disappointment and suspicions.

Will holds his breath.

"It's cuz of his brother," Will blurts out and Frank looks at him with interest. "He's visiting for a while and is kind of a trouble maker so Mr. Lecter wants to keep an eye on him," Will explains.

"Huh," Frank says and opens his mouth to say more but firmly shuts it. Will breathes a sigh of relief. Whatever else is going on in Frank's mind at the moment, he's choosing not to share with his son, and for that, Will is grateful.

"Well...your first job and your first lay-off. Welcome to the workforce son!" Frank says, raising his glass.

Under normal circumstances, Will would have rolled his eyes and refused to toast such a cheesy comment, but this time he welcomes the diversion.

"To my first job, 'Paid-off, laid off,' he jokes, repeating one of Frank's old phrases and Frank chuckles appreciatively.

Frank says the blessing and they eat their meal. For the first time in weeks, Will is chatty; reminiscing about their old home and garden until it's time to clean-up.

Then while Frank showers and prepares for his shift Will unpacks his homework and pretends to study.

Frank comes into the kitchen to fill a thermos of coffee and pack a snack. "Did you get your final wages?" Frank asks, as he fills a container with leftover beans and rice from the day before.

"Not yet," Will admits.

"Want me to go with you when you get it?" Frank asks, grabbing some apples from the frig.

"No, that's okay," Will says. "I'll just go after school tomorrow before Mass."

"Alrighty," Frank says easily and Will feels guilty at how much trust his father has in him. "I'll be heading out now. Don't stay-up too late!" Frank says.

"I won't, I'm almost done," Will says.

"Good night son," Frank says.

"Night dad!" Will calls and counts to one hundred before running to the bathroom and locking the door behind him.

As he peels his clothes off, Will closes his eyes and imagines Anthony is in the room with him,naked and warm.

"*Thought he'd never leave*," he imagines saying to Anthony as they step into the hot, steaming stream and the memory of Anthony's sexy chuckle echoes through his head. Will stands under the shower and imagines Anthony's lips on his. Will has never felt so aroused in his life and he quickly lathers and begins to stroke himself.

"Anthony," he groans and cums after only a few pumps and slumps weak-kneed against the tiled shower wall.

"Shit," he sighs, grabbing the shampoo. He wonders as he washes his hair if Anthony is doing exactly the same thing he's doing right now. That thought alone causes his penis to rise again.

"*Two in one shower! That's a new, personal record,"* he thinks smugly as he begins to pump again, orgasming quickly to the memory of Anthony's round, tight ass and his knowing look.

"*Just for you*," Will thinks, rinsing his hands, "*only for you Tony,*" He repeats and finishes his shower in record time.

Chapter End Notes

Forelsket- (Danish) -the euphoria you experience when you are first falling in love.

What should the next chapter be about?
1. Nigel runnng amok
2. Frank dating
3. Will meeting Anthony's family
Its up to you guys...

The French Martini

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Nigel have an altercation. Hannibal reminisces about Richard and makes a booty call.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Mr. Lecter?" Hannibal is stopped by one of his newer customers as he is hurrying back home.

"Mr. Patterson! Good evening!"

Patterson looks embarrassed."Please call me Ned. And...this isn't really my place, but as a fellow retailer, I was wondering whether you might be open to a bit of advice?"

"Of course!" Hannibal hopes his impatience doesn't show on his face; he never planned on leaving Nigel alone in the store for this long.

"It's concerning your store hours. I've noticed that you've been experiencing unexpected and unusual closures. And I've noticed a young boy..." Hannibal sees where this is heading and cuts him off.

"Will? Yes he was never an employee, just a youngster whose father needed a temporary place for him to stay after school. And I apologize for the closures; both issues have been resolved."

" That was very kind of you to take on that responsibility..." Mr. Patterson's sentence peters out and Hannibal looks at him quizzically, wondering if he's going to hear a complaint about Nash.

" Well, I went past your store just now and the lights were off and the door was locked, but no note was posted. Are you on your way back? May I walk with you?"

Hannibal's mind races with this new development. "*Nigel has been here less than twenty four hours and already has wreaked utter havoc*," he reflects grimly.

"I'm so sorry, I must have forgotten to post one. I actually won't be reopening tonight."

Mr. Patterson looks disappointed, crestfallen, to be exact, and Hannibal takes a mental step backwards.

"*Oh! Mr. Patterson is interested!"* His ego purrs. Too bad the man's not his type.

"I see. But I'm glad I ran into you anyway. I keep forgetting to give you this; I've written my email on the back there." Mr. Patterson nonchalantly hands Hannibal his business card.

"Thank you. I'll add this to my files. Have a pleasant night Mr. Patterson!"

"Ned...Goodnight Mr. Lecter."

Just as his admirer had warned, the shop is locked and dark. Hannibal checks that the side gate is securely padlocked then unlocks the front entrance and goes inside. He checks the security footage, empties and balances the register, and stores the payments in the safe. When everything is just as it should be, Hannibal sets the alarms and goes upstairs. As he walks up, the stillness of the building leads him to believe Nigel is not home. "*Where did he go*?" He wonders irritably. Irritation morphs into anger when he enters his apartment.

Atrocious.

A stranger, observing the chaos, might wrongly assume a SWAT team had been through here, searching for drugs; Hannibal knows better. He picks his way through the detritus left by "Hurricane Nigel," determined that upon his return, his twin will be the one cleaning this up. Tamping down his fury, Hannibal changes out of his work clothes and into sleep pants and a baggy sweater. He's hanging-up his suit when he notices something odd out in the back yard.

The lights in his outbuildings are on.

Hannibal grabs the first jacket he sees in his closet and retrieves his keys from his dressertop. Barefoot, he pads down the backstairs and deactivates the door alarm. A strong wind is whipping the trees in the courtyard and the outdoor lights are swaying. An emergency vehicle is screaming down a nearby street, then as the sound of its siren recedes, Hannibal hears an unusual noise in the sudden quiet. He stops and listens; moans and thumps and curses coming from his garage.

"*Someone is getting killed or fucked in there*," he determines.

Neither scenario is acceptable.

He follows the noises to outside the room he uses to sort stock. Now he can differentiate two voices, male and female, and the unmistakable sound of flesh hitting flesh.

"Like that?! Like it up your ass? You're not going to be able to fucking sit after I'm done with you!"

Hannibal's nose wrinkles with a mixture of disgust and annoyance.

"Take...it...easy...baby!" A woman's voice grunts between thrusts.

Nigel laughs."Get up!" He orders to the unknown female.

Hannibal swings open the door and sees his brother's bare ass as he gets up from pressing a woman's naked body against his work table. "*That's going to need to be sterilized*," he thinks grimly.

Nigel looks over his shoulder and snorts. He yanks the woman upright; apparently she was taking too long for his liking."Hey! Is it okay if my brother joins in?" He grins and the woman gasps and covers herself.

"I'm not into that kinky double-shit! And my guy knows where I am!" She warns.

At least Nigel is wearing a condom, Hannibal observes. "Get her out of here!" He barks in Danish and Nigel pulls his condom off and tosses it in the trash; a minor miracle.

"Give me a minute, just gonna deep throat the whore and then she'll be on her way," Nigel answers in Danish as he grabs a fresh condom and pushes the woman roughly to her knees. Repulsed, Hannibal walks out to wait by the gate, shivering in the cold wind. It's a relief when the woman finally emerges and leaves so Hannibal can lock the gate after her. Nigel strolls out from the garage puffing on a cigarette, mellowed from his orgasm. At least his twin remembered to shut off the lights and lock the doors. Hannibal holds his hand out and Nigel returns the set of extra keys.

"I'm tired as fuck, wanna nightcap?" Nigel confesses, yawning and stretching as he follows Hannibal into the house and up to the apartment. Hannibal waits until Nigel's back is turned and distractedly rooting through the refrigerator before going behind his brother and kicking his legs out from under him.

Jet lagged, fucked-out, and still weakened from his poisoning, Nigel hits the floor hard and doesn't get up. Hannibal pounces on Nigel's chest pinning his arms with his knees. Then he wraps both hands around Nigel's neck and squeezes. Within seconds, Nigel's eyes are bulging and his face is brick red. He bucks and writhes under his brother's weight, his hands flapping uselessly.

Hannibal captures his brother's frantic eyes with his own."You will **never** disrespect my home or business like that ever again," he hisses and Nigel's mouth works like a fish out of water. Hannibal releases him and Nigel gasps and coughs, wheezing as he breaths in lungfuls of air.

"Fuck, Hanni! You almost chocked me out!" He rasps when he can speak again.

Wordlessly, Hannibal pours his brother a glass of tap water and offers it to him. Nigel drains the glass, though half of it ends up on his shirt and the floor.

"Fuck!" Nigel repeats as he pants. "You're a real Debbie Downer!"

"You need to leave. Tonight."

Nigel looks up in surprise; Hannibal is serious." *Oh, shit!*" He worries, rubbing his tender neck," *He's gone American Psycho on me!"*

"Fine! Just let me take a shower and..."

"No, the cab will be here in less than an hour. Pack and be ready."

Nigel blinks.

"Hanni...what the fuck's wrong with you?!" Hannibal's eyes are flat and reptilian and Nigel struggles hard against his fear.

"The condition of you staying here was that you would behave. Terrorizing my staff, closing my store without my knowledge or permission, bringing a prostitute to my property...you walked her through my store, didn't you?!"

"So what?! I didn't know the combination! What the fuck did you expect us to do? Climb the fucking fence? " Nigel rubs his aching head. "Remember that time we climbed that pub's fucking wall?" Nigel reminisces, hoping a little fraternal nostalgia would soften-up his brother.

It doesn't.

"Be ready," Hannibal warns and leaves to perch on the couch.

"*Like a fucking gargoyle*," Nigel jokes to himself but knows better than to share his witticism.

The taxi bearing Nigel and his suitcases pulls away and Hannibal smiles blithely, feeling himself relax for the first time in days. "*Little cocksucker*," he thinks affectionately and secures his home for the final time that night. He returns to his apartment and looks at his mantel clock. It's still early, barely nine 'o clock. *"I'm bored!"* Hannibal realizes. *"I wonder what Rich...oh, that's right, Richard is no longer with us*," Hannibal laughs and shakes his head at his faulty memory. "*Frank would be a pleasant drinking companion, but he works tonight, and there's the problem of the boy."* Hannibal is disappointed that his association with the child had ended so unhappily."*Perhaps, now that Nigel is gone, I can fold him and his father back into my life. Maybe not bring him back to work*," he thinks remembering Patterson's comment, "*but more as a family friend.*"

Hannibal goes into his kitchen and takes his cocktail shaker down from the cupboard, pondering what kind of martini to make; leftover knowledge from a "bartending class for couples" Richard had dragged him to last year.
"*It certainly has come in handy*," he admits, and studies the contents of his refrigerator: Chambord, orange juice, pineapple juice. "*I'll make a French Martini and toast absent friends*," he decides. He measures vodka and thinks about sex, or more specifically, how he would like some tonight. His mind dwells on his sure thing. *"Ned? Ted? What was his*

Christian name? Not my type," Hannibal admits shaking his cocktail, "*but with the lights off, Ned/Ted could work just fine, especially if he's face down*."

"*Richard*," Hannibal admits to himself, "*was attractive*."

He pours the bright, red cocktail into a martini glass; it reminds him of drinking French Martinis with Richard on Bastille Day. They'd been visiting London and had just happened upon a little brassiere. "*The waiter had mistaken Richard for Idris Elba*," Hannibal recalls. "*Richard had liked that, and insisted we play along*."

"*If Richard was Idris, then Frank is Daniel Craig*," he muses and takes an investigatory sip. "*Needs more vodka*," he determines and adds what's left in the jigger.

Perfect.

"*Now... where did I put that business card*?" He wonders and goes to arrange his booty call.

Settled in his hotel room, Nigel places some calls while he raids the mini bar. Six calls so far and not one of his contacts have offered to put him up. Now he's pissed-off and half in the bag.

"Fuckers had no problem staying with me in Amsterdam, or Paris; drinking my booze, fucking their girlfriends in my guest rooms," he reflects sourly and throws his phone down. He wishes he were back in Hannibal's comfortable apartment under Hannibal's double headed shower.

His brother's neighborhood was also of interest to Nigel and his network. It was a good mix of working and professional households with easy access to a large population of kids; kids who might be enticed by the promise of drugs and cash. "*Probably not that little fucker, what was his name? Will Graham? Looks like a god damn cupid on a fucking cathedral ceiling. But I bet his school is full of little shits who'd work for a taste or a Franklin. And the whores! You can't throw a rock without hitting one over there, what's the fuck up with that? Not that I'm complaining!*" Nigel yawns and attempts to pull his boots off. "*At least back home the whores are tested. That crusty old skank was probably dirty as fuck*," he grins and lies down on his bed, boots and all. "*Maybe I'll move so I can be closer to Hanni, open my own business, settle down*," he daydreams, sinking into the mattress. " *I need to go back and scope it out. Fucker won't even know I'm there... Hannibal the upstanding citizen*," Nigel laughs at the irony of it all before finally passing-out, dead to the world, until his alarm wakes him the next day.
.

Chapter End Notes

Nigel's character and his "business plan" is reprehensable- but not canon, I've taken major liberties with him.

Also, please note that the author does not condone the views or treatment these characters demonstrate to people who work as prostitutes.

Lies!Lies! Lies (they're gonna get you!)

Chapter Summary

Will lies to Frank.
Frank gets set-up on a blind date.

Chapter Notes

You know when you're a kid and you think you're SO smart and lie to your parents and then they find out?
Yeah, me too.

chapter title "Lies" by the Thompson Twins.

Will had known he was intentionally lying to his father when he'd told him he would collect his final pay before Mass on Friday.

"*There's no way I'm ever going back to that asshole's place ever again,*" he promises himself as he watches the priest prepare for Holy Communion. "*And it's not like he cares anyway*."

Will's face heats with the memory of Hannibal's words. "*Fuck 'em,"* he tells himself. "*His head's so big...it's like Tony* says,' *Big ego, small dick' Bet Tony's is already bigger than his!"*

A nun glances Will's way and he feels the need to bite back his smirk and rein-in his thoughts.

"*Sorry Jesus, sorry God*," he prays quickly.

He idly watches as his classmates and parishioners rise and line-up to accept the host, feeling smug that he is allowed to remain in his seat. He doesn't mind not being permitted to take Communion; it just means he has more time to think in peace.

Tony filters past and Will sits up straighter.

Trying not to appear too obvious, he turns to get a glimpse of the other boy's rear as he passes but doesn't succeed; Tony's blocked by other students.

Will sighs with exasperation then notices the same nun watching him. Hoping to look pious, Will pulls out a Bible from the pew holder and pretends to read. He feels the sister's eyes still on him so he looks up and smiles sweetly. She returns his smile then moves along to another pew, admonishing some girls she considers are taking too long to get in line.

Feeling happy, he rests his head against the hard pew; the Bible falling unheeded to his lap. He'll be glad to "see the back of this week" as his dad likes to say, but even more than that, he has a good feeling that this is going to be the weekend they'll finally find the dog they've been searching for.

When it's time to sing the Doxology, Will does so with his whole heart. Maybe, just maybe he thinks, it'll make- up for his impure thoughts during church.

He can't wait to get home and begin his weekend.

"Well hello Lavinia, how are you?"

Frank is still a little groggy after waking on the sofa bed; he and Will are taking turns occupying the one bedroom.

"Pert as a cricket! I'm sorry, did I wake you?"

"I needed to get up anyways. But now that I have a lovely lady on the line, I'm feeling wide awake!"

"Max the Knife! How've you been? How's your health?"

Frank frowns and has to think about how not to sound peevish in response to her invasive questions.

"Well, I have my good days and my bad days," Frank admits; even Will doesn't know that the bad have begun to outnumber the good.

"You keep on top of that Mister! Don't be a caveman about your health! You take care of yourself and see your doctor."

"Yes ma'am I'm aiming to do that, just gotta wait for a slot to come clear; not too many nephrologists in my network."

"Oh dear. No, I'd imagine there aren't. May I change the topic for a moment?"

"Of course."

Frank lowers himself into his easy chair as pain spears his side; he tries to breathe through his nose as quietly as he can. Thankfully, Lavinia appears none the wiser.

"You see, I have a friend, a younger woman, whose mother just died, so she's rather at loose ends. I was hoping to distract her with dinner at my home next week and I was wondering if you would come as well."

"Huh! Well that is a very kind invitation, but just so's you know I don't date all that often, or all that well."

Lavinia's cackling laugh sounds over the line.

"Don't think of it as a date then! Think of it as three, intelligent adults sharing a meal."

Frank has been down this road many times since his wife's abandonment and he'd always found the situations miserable. He scrambles for an alternative to Lavinia's plan.

"You're not inviting Hannibal?"

"I hadn't planned on it. Why!? Are you interested in Hannibal?"

Lavinia sounds both surprised and very intrigued.

"No, not in the way I believe you're aiming at, but I do consider him a friend."

"Hmmf. When I was young we didn't have to worry about all this "sexual fluidity" as the young people call it."

Frank holds the phone away and sighs quietly.

"There were men, women, and those few souls who never married but lived with their "friends"; my brother being one of them. He never trusted the family enough to admit what we already knew; that his "housemate" Ray was actually his lover. Never felt he could bring Ray to holidays or family get togethers. He kept the charade, but I lost a brother. Men and their pride! Are you still there?"

"I'm still here," Frank confirms politely.

"Oh, well! That's all ancient history. How old are you Frank?"

Lavinia's conversational topics, it seems could turn on a dime.

"Thirty-three."

"Lands, you're still young! Plenty of time to find someone and create a new life for you and the boy."

Frank barely has time to recover from his surprise at Lavinia's comment before she's tutting in exasperation.

"Frank? My apologies, but I need to hang-up and go take care of something; for Hannibal as a matter of fact. I'll extend the invitation to him next time I speak with him. But either way, I'll text you all the information. Did you know that I text now!? Give my love to Will!"

Then without another word, Lavinia is gone.

"*Whew. She could talk the bark off a tree. I hope Hannibal does come, I'll need reinforcements if I'm going to survive this dinner."*

"Hey dad!"

Will is back from Mass, and appears to be in an exceptionally good mood.

"Hey there! How was Mass?"

"Boring," Will says as he roosts around in the cupboards and finally pulls out a bag of Saltines, "we got any milk?"

"Nope, not till Tuesday. Maybe I should go with you to that church sometimes. See what it's all about?"

"Why? It's practically the same thing as our church except there are all these prayers, and responses, and, incense and stuff."

Will's description of Catholicism makes Frank laugh.

"If they're not against us, they're for us," he quotes and Will rolls his eyes.

"I'm going because I have to for school. You don't have to so why do it ?!"

"Alright," Frank says easily abandoning his suggestion. "Want some peanut butter on those?"

'No, not if we don't have milk."

"Did you get your wages?"

Luckily Frank's back is turned when he asks this question so he misses Will's guilty look.

"Yeah, I already went by an ATM and deposited it."

"So, no hard feelings?"

Frank does turn now to examine his son's face.

"No. No hard feelings."

"Good! I'm sure you'll still want to go by and see Mr. Lecter and Nash once in a while, even if you're not working with them."

Will jumps to his feet; he's getting irritated with his dad's interfering questions.

"Yup! I'm going to go study now."

"Alright, dinner in twenty five minutes."

"Ms. Greene has invited me and one of her friends to dinner next week."

Will jolts to attention.

"Her friend? Like an old lady?"

"Well, she said she was a younger woman, but I don't really know."

"*Wow! Ms. Greene moves fast!"* Will thinks approvingly.

"Which night?"

"Next Saturday, is that alright?"

"Yeah. Could I have a friend over?"

"A friend? While I'm gone?"

"Yeah. His name is Anthony. He has soccer in the morning but then he could come in the afternoon. We could make dinner for ourselves; chili or something and watch movies."

"Is this a new friend? I don't think I know him."

"*Yeah, cuz I would never talk about him with you- duh!"*

"He's in two of my classes and he's on the soccer team."

Will can tell what's on Frank's mind so he decides a little harmless deception is in order.

"He got in trouble last week for PDA with a girl in the hallway. But that's the only bad thing he's ever done. He's a nice guy!"

"PDA?" Frank looks alarmed and Will would have laughed if this wasn't so important.

"Public Display of Affection. He flexed for a girl and she felt his arm."

"Oh, I see...PDA. She his girlfriend?"

"No, just some stupid girl," Will says, trying to look innocent as he spears a slice of zucchini on his fork; the STDs of vegetable gardens.

"If you do have him over, I'll need to speak with one of his parents, let them know what I'll be doing and where I'll be. If it's okay with them, then it's okay with me. He lives close by?"

"No, a couple train stops away from school."

"Hmmm. I won't be home until late. We can walk him to the station, but what about when he gets home? I'll talk to his parents about it."

"Maybe he could spend the night?"

Frank blinks with surprise.

"Boys do that? I thought only girls have slumber parties."

Even though Will knows Frank isn't serious, he's too keyed-up to think it's funny.

"That's sexist dad. We're not going to paint our nails and bake cookies."

"Who's being sexist now?"

Will has the good grace to laugh though all he can think about is the fact that he and TONY might be alone in the apartment; might even share a bed. His palms get sweaty just thinking about it and he knows he'll need to take a shower soon in order to calm down.

"Will."

One look at his father' face and it's clear that something has just occurred to his dad. Frank's expression and tone are so sober, his emotions so tingled with sadness that Will nearly drops his fork in guilty panic.

"What?"

"I would like you to be truthful with me about something."

Will's heart jumps to his throat; he wonders if he looks as guilty as he feels.

"*Shitshitshitshitshitshit."*

"About what?"

"Shitshitshitshitshitshit."

Will has to force himself to concentrate on his father's words; his blood is thrumming so loudly in his ears.

"Is Anthony more than a friend?"

Will hopes he doesn't look as guilty as he feels. He tries and fails to meet Frank's piercing blue eyes. Instead, he fixes his gaze on Frank's hands; strong, weathered, accustomed to hard work. Will takes a deep breath because apparently he hasn't been breathing since his dad's bombshell.

Bravely, he looks into his father's face.

"Yes."

Will's eyes immediately drop back to Frank's hands then bounce back-up to his face.

Frank looks away, gathering his thoughts.

A trickle of sweat runs down Will's neck.

"Billy."

As Frank speaks his baby name, sadness and disappointment floods the boy; he immediately begins to tear-up.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

Frank looks like he is close to tears himself and now Will's eyes are swimming. He blinks and impatiently wipes his eyes with his thumb.

"I don't know! It's not a big deal daddy!"

"It is to me. Especially if you want him to come here when I'm gone."

Frank's face changes.

"Have you brought him already? While I was at work?"

"No!"

Will insulted exclamation rings with truth.

"And we aren't going to do anything! Jeez! We're not sex maniacs or something!"

Frank looks simultaneously incredulous, angry, and about to laugh.

"That's not the point sport. If this boy and you are ... a couple, you can't be alone together. It's no different than if you were a boy and a girl, or a girl and a girl."

Will knows his father is only trying to protect him, but his logic is being short circuited by his libido.

"That's not fair! You're going to Ms. Greene's house to go on a date and'll probably have sex with that woman!"

"William! Don't be so disrespectful! What I do is not your business. What you do, however, is my business."

Will stands up, the look of hatred in his blue eyes going straight to Frank's heart; he's twenty three again, married to a young wife who glares at him with that same expression; a wife who despises him and the newborn son she feels she's been tricked into bearing.

Frank forces himself to re-center his thoughts on the here and now; his son needs him completely present.

"You want me to be trustworthy, but you don't even give me a chance to show you I am!"

Will slams his chair in and grabs his half-filled plate. Frank nods and sighs but says nothing. The boy places the plate into the refrigerator and the glass in the sink.

"I'm going to go for a walk."

"No."

Will is already halfway to the door when he jerks to a halt.

"Why not?!"

"It's too late. I don't want you out at this time of night."

"It's not even eight!"

"It's dark outside. You're not going out."

Will feels like flames are coming out of his ears, he's so angry.

"You never let me do ANYTHING!"

"Go to your room sport."

Frank's quiet words contrast sharply with his demeanor; Will can feel his father's simmering anger though another person probably wouldn't be able to tell.

"Mr. Lecter, and now you! Everyone hates me!"

Will realizes his blunder as soon is the words leave his mouth but it's too late; they're out there now, lingering in the quiet room. Will feels Frank's surprise overlaying his anger.

"Oh no!"

This could be bad.

Will practically sprints down the short hall and into his room.

BOOM

The shoddy apartment's walls shake when Will slams the bedroom's door.

Back at the table, Will's final words play over and over in Frank's head.

He sits for a moment staring at nothing, thinking back over the last few days.

Sighing, he closes his eyes, rubs them, then gets up and consults his phone; three hours until his shift begins.

He places a call.

"Mind Palace."

"Nash? It's Frank, Will's dad."

"Hi Frank! Where's Will?"

"He's home today. May I speak with Mr. Lecter?"

"Okay, hold on please."

The phone clatters to the counter and Frank hears faint voices.

Within a few seconds Hannibal comes on the line.

"Frank! Hello! How's Will?"

"He's why I'm calling. I was hoping to come over there and speak with you about him."

A pregnant pause, then; "Is everything alright?"

"It is, I just wanted your opinion about something. May I come tonight?"

On the other end of the line Hannibal frowns; he wonders what the boy has told his father.

"Of course, we close at eleven. Do you work tonight?"

"Yes, at ten, so I'd like to come over now if I may."

"Does this conversation require that I close the store?" Hannibal is only half joking.

Frank chuckles and Hannibal involuntary smiles and relaxes.

"Don't worry, I'm not planning on causing a ruckus."

Hannibal laughs at both his own over dramatic response and Frank's quaint colloquialism.

"Alright, I'll see you tonight, what time may I expect you?"

"Half an hour?"

"I look forward to seeing you."

"Wonderful. Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

Mending fences

Chapter Summary

Hannibal finds himself with an important decision to make.

Chapter Notes

Wow...this was a hard, tricky chapter to write. Hope everyone enjoys it!

this chapter is dedicated to my pal IaBlMeanie who made a certain request chapters ago which I'm finally fitting-in

and to Dreamlife77 who is an amazing commenter-thank you both :0)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal sees a marked change in Frank as soon as the man walks through his door.

"Hello Frank! How have you been?"

Not well, it seems.

"Hello! I've been keepin' busy. Hello there Nash! How ya been?"

"Hi Frank! Okay. Where's Will? Why doesn't he come anymore?"

Frank looks at Hannibal in surprise and allows him to answer Nash's question.

"We will talk about it again in a little while Nash. Right now, Frank and I are going to have a conversation by the monitors; alright?"

"Okay."

Nash flashes Frank a farewell smile and goes to stand behind the register.

"Bye!"

"See you soon Nash!" Frank calls and follows Hannibal back behind the swinging gate.

"Can I get you anything? Tea, coffee?"

"A glass of water would be grand."

Hannibal nods and goes to the break room for a glass of ice water.

He watches with quiet concern as Frank gulps it down.

"Would you like more?"

"No, that hit the spot. Thanks."

Hannibal inclines his head in acknowledgement, his trepidation about Frank's health increasing. This close, Hannibal can see how tired and thin Frank's face has become.

"Of course! What can I do for you?"

"Normally I wouldn't pry into another man's business..."

"But when it involves Will, your natural compunctions are put aside?"

Frank laughs.

"You put it well."

Then Frank morphs into the sort of man Hannibal has dealt with many times in his previous life; an enforcer.

"Will told me when he came here today that there were 'no hard feelings' between the two of you, but later tonight blurted-out that 'you hate him.'"

"Oh dear."

Instantly, Hannibal understands what Will has done.

"Will hasn't been back since he left on Monday. Naturally he was upset at the time, but I hope I made it clear to him that his dismissal had nothing to do with his performance. And I certainly don't 'hate him.' "

Frank nods, rubbing his jaw line and sighs.

"May I confide in you?"

Hannibal is pinioned by Frank's striking eyes.

"Please do."

Frank frowns thoughtfully.

"He mentioned your brother."

"Did he? What did he say?"

Hannibal's affect instantly answers one of Frank's unanswered questions; Hannibal does indeed have a brother whom he considers a liability.

"Just that he was visiting and you felt compelled to spend time with him... so you felt you didn't have the time to monitor Will as well," Frank replies with a half truth.

"*For søren! He's lying. Did Will 'feel' one of Nigel's more unsavory emotions or experiences and share it with Frank? No. Will has never confided the extent of his abilities to his father. If he had, he would never have been allowed near me again."*

Hannibal knows what he needs to do: continue this charade for a few lies more, shake Frank's hand and never see him or his son again.

And yet...and yet.

As Hannibal looks into Frank's handsome, interested face, he feels subject to a strange and troubling phenomena; the inexplicable need to be liked, even admired by the father and his young son.

An odd sentiment, he admits, for someone who typically uses people as a means to an end.

Hannibal comes to a decision.

"Please, sit."

Once they are both seated, Hannibal begins; telling Frank a heavily edited version of Nigel's past. How as a teenager, Nigel was involved in drugs, stole, did time, but managed to straighten-out his life to become a successful entrepreneur. How, while staying with Hannibal on his most recent business trip Nigel had encountered Will and frightened the child.

"Now I know that in my attempt to protect both Will and Nigel I overreacted. Especially since Nigel moved into a hotel that same night and there is no chance of them ever meeting again."

During his monologue, it's not gone unnoticed by Hannibal that Frank's eyes have remained fixed upon him, never looking away or showing a reaction of any kind. "*Butcher than butch,"* Hannibal thinks admiringly as he finishes his story and falls silent.

"My boy never mentioned he'd met your brother. What happened between them?"

"Ah...that was unfortunate. My brother is also my twin, so he played a little prank on Will. He pretended to be me while I was momentarily out of the store. They were together only a minute or two."

Something isn't adding-up in Frank's mind but he doesn't voice it. Instead, he twirls has cane thoughtfully.

"Thank you, Hannibal. You didn't have to tell me this; but you did. That means a lot to me. "

Hannibal feels a juvenile sense of warmth at the praise; it's like being blessed by a saint, or a sexy Godfather.

"Maybe you could bring Will here and I could apologize for the way I handled the situation; talk things through with him?"

Frank considers the suggestion then smiles into Hannibal's face.

"I have an even better idea, but let me have a talk with Will first. He and I still need to hash a few things out."

"Mr. Lecter?" Nash is at the swinging gate with a phone in his hand. "There's a Mr. Swanwick on the line and he says he needs to talk with you."

"Thank you Nash, tell him I'll be right there."

Hannibal turns back to Frank.

"I'll look forward to hearing from you then?"

"Yes, I'll keep in touch, goodbye."

The two men shake hands and when Hannibal goes to take his call, Frank pays Nash a visit.

"How've ya been sport?"

"Okay I guess. Hannibal took me to clean-out Richard's apartment."

"Oh...well...how was that?"

"I felt sad because he's dead. I cried."

"Do you feel better now?"

"A little. I still miss him. He used to come visit me and bring donuts."

Frank decides in that moment that he and Will would begin a new tradition on Sundays; he feels guilty for not having thought of it before.

"I miss my brother too, it's a hard thing, isn't it?"

"Yup."

"Well, I'm gonna go get ready for work now. Have a nice night and be safe when you walk home."

"Okay. Good night Frank.

"Goodnight, Nash."

The morning after their fight, Frank wakes up early and knocks on Will's door.

"Meet me out in the living room in five minutes please."

And though Frank has tacked-on a 'please', it's clear that this is a command, rather than a request.

Will gets up to take a leak.

"*Don't tell him anything else about Anthony...blabbermouth!" H*e orders his image in the mirror. *"Fuck! Why did I tell him we're a couple? We're not even dating!*"

Will walks into the living room to find Frank already ensconced in his favorite chair; a tiny part of Will's brain notices how tired and frail Frank looks in the morning light.

"Don't!" He warns himself."*Don't worry about that. Worry about what he is going to ask you!"*

Will flops down on a chair at the table.

"Hey."

"Good morning!"

"So far so good."

"I know that you never went back to the store this Friday..." Will opens his mouth to protest, but Frank holds up his hand to stop him, " but I don't want to talk about that right now. Right now, I'd like you to tell me everything that went on during your last day of work."

So certain that Frank was about to grill him about Anthony, Will is startled by this turn of events.

"He knows... shit!" Will is both embarrassed and furious for having been being caught in a lie.

"Why? I already told you what happened!"

"Well, I would like you to tell me again, with more details this time."

Will just can't catch a break these days.

"It's not a big deal dad! Why do I have to tell you?"

"Good! If it's not a big deal, then you shouldn' mind tellin' me. And the truth this time."

"Fine!"

"I'm screwed anyway!" He thinks angrily.

Will recounts to Frank how on Monday, he'd brought his new bike to show Mr. Lecter and Nash, only to find Nash missing and Mr. Lecter acting strangely.

"Then the real Mr. Lecter came in and I found out I'd been talking to his twin Nigel. Did you talk to Mr. Lecter about this?"

"A little, but I would like to hear it from you now. What happened when you were alone with Nigel?"

"Nothing! Nothing happened! He's an ass-" Will stops himself at Frank's frown, "...a jerk, who pretended to be Mr. Lecter! That's it!"

Frank nods, so far, Will's story is jiving-up with Hannibal's.

"Then what happened?"

"Really, Sherlock?!"

Will can't believe they aren't done with this conversation yet; he sighs heavily.

"Then Mr. Lecter took me outside and told me how he and his brother are *'so important in the business community*,'" Will's air quotes are a mastery of snarkiness, "that I could put them out of business... or some bullshit...if I went around telling people Nigel was a criminal...and then he fired me so I left!"

Will alternately rushes and falters through his story, too upset to censure himself even for his father's sake. The memory of that exchange still stings, Will drops his eyes hoping Frank won't notice his tears.

"I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that cussing young man...is that everything?"

"Yes!"

Will doesn't have the moral high ground to be justified in his resentment of Frank's probing questions, especially considering what happened later in the school yard, but he's still insulted that Frank would ask.

"Alrigh', thank you for telling me."

As Frank watches his only child fighting back tears, he's struggling with his own instincts.

All Frank wants to do at this moment is to pull Will into his arms and hug him; tell him he loves him, and will always be there to comfort and protect him.

But that's not the response his son needs right now.

"It sounds to me like Mr. Lecter was trying, in his own way, to protect you."

Will jerks his head up, his eyes, glassy with tears are blazingly fierce.

"NO! He's a bas- I hate him!"

"You hate him? Why?"

" Because...because..."

"Look at me Will."

Will looks into his father's face.

"You are angry with Mr. Lecter because you believe he betrayed your friendship."

Will blinks rapidly. Frank can see the wheels turning behind his son's eyes and his expression of utter devastation feels like a punch to Frank's gut.

"Yeah," Will whispers, tears beginning to trickle down his face. "He thinks I'm just some stupid kid he can't trust...but I'm not! I'm not!"

"Oh, bubba..."Frank says sadly and holds out his arms.

Will launches himself onto Frank's chest and begins to sob.

Frank wraps his strong arms around his boy and strokes his hair, waiting until he quiets. Then he pulls Will away so he can see his face.

"Mr. Lecter made a mistake. But I don't believe he really feels that way about you. I think he was upset that you were upset so he made a snap decision that he's come to regret."

"You do?"

"I do. But just for the sake of argument, let's pretend he did feel that way 'bout you. That still doesn't mean you have to hate 'em."

"Why not!" Will argues sourly.

"Because chief, your whole life you'll meet people who will do and say things to try and pull you down; make you feel little about yourself. But remember, their words and deeds matter less to you than the dirt under your feet."

Frank squeezes his son. "Even when you're all grown-up and I'm not with you anymore, I want you to remember this; you are a smart, loving, resilient person, and no one, not man, woman, or child, can ever take that away from you. I'm proud to be your daddy. Do you understand?"

Will nods and wipes his hand across his face. Then he leans forward to rest his damp, hot check against his father's cool, scratchy one.

"Yeah...but I still hate it."

Frank laughs.

"Well, I'm not saying it's gonna be easy! I've slipped-up more times than I care to admit. But you'll get better at dealin' with it as you go along. I promise."

He gives one of Will's curls a little tug to get his attention.

"You know what my mama usta say? She'd say, "Francis...'No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.'"

Will wipes his eyes one last time and grins.

"*Francis!*"

Frank laughs; relieved his son is feeling better.

"You mockin' my name, boy!?"

Frank playfully pokes Will in the ribs then begins to tickle him.

"Stoooop! I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Will laughs wriggling out of Frank's arms and returning to his own seat.

"So...you think you might wanna go speak to Mr. Lecter?"

"What? Today!?" Will looks startled.

"No not today, but sometime soon. Give 'em the chance to 'pologize to you like the man he is."

"Do you think he would?" Will is shocked by the idea.

"I'd bet the bank on in buster. Now, how about some breakfast? And while we're eating...you can tell me all about this Anthony fella."

"Dad! You're so nosy!" Will protests. Though after their talk, even telling his dad about Anthony doesn't feel like the big deal it had seemed only minutes earlier.

"*But I'm still not telling him we kissed!"* He vows to himself.

"Fine!" Will agrees sassily. "But only if you promise you'll tell me all about your date with that woman next week!"

Frank smiles.

"Deal!"

"Where are we going?"

It's Sunday afternoon and Frank and Will are on an unfamiliar bus.

"It's a surprise, champ."

"Can you please not call me that in public?"

At thirteen and a few months, Will feels he has every right to protest inappropriate nicknames.

"A'right, deal."

Frank peers out the window and pushes the call button. The bus pulls to the curb and Frank gets up, but nearly falls when the bus jerks.

"Careful!"

Will grabs his father to help steady him.

"I'm alright!" Frank grumbles, pulling his elbow out of Will's hand and descending the stairs; he doesn't appreciate being treated like an invalid.

Will meets him down on the sidewalk and looks around.

"Where are we?"

"You'll see. Just gotta walk a couple blocks more."

Frank is heavily fatigued by the time they arrive at the large, industrial looking building and he leans against a pole to rest.

"Newfoundland Animal Shelter," Will reads and breaks into the kind of smile that convinces Frank his Maker has not forsaken him.

"Let's go in."

Will has his hand on the handle when it's pulled opened for him.

He looks up in surprise; Hannibal is here, holding the door, smiling widely at his surprise.

"Hello Will."

Will shoots Frank a dirty look.

"Don't look at me like that, say 'hello' to Mr. Lecter and let me get in out' the sun."

Will obediently stands aside for his father though his scowl never leaves. Seeing Mr. Lecter like this has brought back all his feelings of betrayal and embarrassment.

The three of them stand in the entryway regarding one another.

"Shall I begin?" Hannibal asks studying the young boy before him. "Will, I would like to apologize to you for what I said and did. And also for my brother's behavior."

Will glares at his father; the traitor.

"What is he doing here? I thought we were gonna get a dog!"

"We are, if you see one you like. I asked Mr. Lecter here so you two could clear the air."

Hannibal holds out his hand. "I'm sorry Will. Can we still be friends?"

Eyes downcast Will reluctantly takes it.

"It's fine," he says, shaking Hannibal's hand then dropping it quickly.

But Hannibal remains unsatisfied. He looks over to Frank who nods.

"Say what you have to say, Hannibal, you have my permission."

Comprehension dawns on Will as he looks from Hannibal to his father. "*Sons of bitches! They're in this together! This must be what it's like to have two parents! They gang-up on you!"*

But even Will's teenage irritation is tempered by the undeniable sense of comfort and security he feels from this development.

"Will, I have very politely asked you for your forgiveness. At this point, as a gentleman, you may either accept or decline my apology. But whichever way you decide, you should look me in the eye when you do it."

Will sighs and looks up into Hannibal's face then drops his gaze down to Hannibal's silk tie and finally to the floor.

Hannibal purses his lips but says nothing.

After a few more uncomfortable moments, during which other visitors are forced to walk around or through their little group, Will lifts his face and looks challengingly into Hannibal's face.

"I...I want to tell you something!"

Hannibal is surprised by the boy's forcefulness.

"Please do."

"I don't like how you said that I would go around and talk about your brother! Like I was some dumb little kid you can't trust!"

And at that moment, Hannibal has an epiphany; Will is no longer the small child he's come to know and love. The boy standing before him is a young man now; a young man with his own opinions about loyalty, and, respect, and integrity.

Hannibal feels simultaneously proud and saddened.

"You're absolutely right Will. I didn't trust you...but I should have. I'm sorry."

Hannibal turns to look at Frank who is radiating paternal love and pride like a small sun. Hannibal's throat involuntarily tightens; he clears it roughly before holding out his hand once more.

"Well now, shall we try this again...man to man?"

This time, when Will takes his hand, it's with a smile so brilliant, so imbued with an adult-like understanding of grace, and forgiveness, Hannibal almost doesn't recognize him.

"Okay. I forgive you."

Hannibal squeezes Will's hand which is still small enough to be completely engulfed by his own. *"Not so much like a man yet*," Hannibal thinks and is oddly comforted by the idea.

"Thank you Will Graham," He says solemnly and Will blushes when he feels how much Mr. Lecter loves him; nearly as much as his own father.

They shake and Frank comes over to put his arms both their shoulders.

"There now! That's more like it!"

"Now can we look at dogs!?" Will begs. He's ready to put all this drama behind him once and for all.

"How about it Hannibal? Ever helped pick-out a mutt from a pound before?" Frank asks, dropping his arms and leading the way to the reception area.

"I haven't, no, but I was adopted by a stray once when I was a boy, so I can understand the attraction."

Hannibal smiles at Will's surprise.

"What? Don't I seem like a 'dog' person to you?"

Will shakes his head and then smiles roguishly.

"Well...maybe a little Chihuahua dressed in a tuxedo that could fit inside your man bag!"

Frank and Hannibal are both so shocked at Will's words, their mouths simultaneously drop.

"William!" Frank is mortified.

Then Hannibal surprises both father and son by doing something they'd never expected. After a moment of stunned silence, he throws his head back and laughs; roars to put it more accurately.

Soon Frank and Will are chuckling then giggling, then laughing along with him.

"A doggie tuxedo..." Hannibal says as he struggles for breath,"...in my 'man purse'!"

When they finally settle down, it is as though there had never been a rift amongst them; Will pulls Hannibal's sleeve.

"Come on Mr. Lecter, let's go find my dog!"

Chapter End Notes

No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.
Eleanor Roosevelt

For søren!-Damn! (euphemism for For satan)

Frontipiece Illustration

Chapter Summary

Finally getting around to posting this! Well, adding a link anyway.

Here is an illustration I commisioned from the lovely doublenegativemeansyes on tumblr several months ago.

It depicts the first time Will and Hannibal met.

I hope you love it as much as I do!!

My name is Will Graham

A Walk to Remember

Chapter Summary

Frank and Will pay a visit.
Hannibal explains to Will what his bookstore is named after.

Chapter Notes

Hello!

Hope you enjoy :-)

And in honor of "Fanfic Appreciation" day? week?

To all the writers out there; you entertain, inspire, and delight more people than you will ever know.
Thank You.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Nash?"

It's Maggie, one of Nash's favorite aides standing beside him as he works at the puzzle table.

"Yes?" Nash answers without looking up; he's nearly finished with the border and can't afford any distractions right now.

"A man named Frank Graham and his son are here for a visit. Would you like to see them?"

Nash jumps to his feet, nearly knocking the pieces off the table.

"Hey! Watch it!" A fellow resident protests.

"Sorry Mr. Salzu! Yeah! I want to see them!"

Nash follows the aide to the reception area where sure enough, Will and Frank are waiting. As soon as they spot Nash, identical shit-eating grins spread across their faces.

"Hi Nash!" They call together.

Then Nash notices that Will is holding a distinctive, pink box.

"Hi! You're here to visit me?"

"Yup!" Will looks happy and excited and Nash knows the reason why.

"Are those donuts?!"

Will laughs as Nash comes over for a closer inspection.

" Uh-huh! A whole dozen! Wanna see 'em?"

"No!" Nash stage whispers."Let's take them into my room! I don't want anyone else to see them!"

"Before we do that Nash, we'd like to show you one more thing. It's just outside."

Frank transfers the bakery box from Will to Maggie whom Nash now observes is strangely happy; happy and excited.

"*Well...everybody likes donuts. I bet she wants one*!"

Another aide, Marco, joins them and Nash begins to feel antsy.

"Hope he doesn't want one too!" He grumbles to himself.

Maggie whispers something into Marco's ear causing the man's smile to brighten and stretch from ear to ear.

Nash wonders if maybe he shouldn't be holding the donut box after all.

"Come on Nash! Don't you want to know what's outside?" Will is vibrating with impatience.

"Outside? A surprise?"

"Uh huh!" Will grabs the man's hand. "Come on! Don't worry about those, she'll bring them with us!"

Nash is practically pulled through the reception area, and out the front door.

Frank and the two aides trail behind.

"Beeep!" Nash imitates the door's alarm as he passes through it and is about to ask Will if his door makes a sound too when he sees Hannibal standing in the front parking lot.

"Mr. Lecter?"

If Santa Claus had suddenly appeared straight from the North Pole, Nash could not have been more astonished.

And even more surprising than finding his boss here, is that Hannibal is holding a tiny, wriggling ,black and white dog.

Eyes glued on the animal, Nash drops Will's hand. A shadowy memory is moving around a corner of his mind, teasing him to remember...remember...

"Wait! I wanna do it!"

Will races past Nash and carefully pulls the squirming puppy from Hannibal's hands. He turns and presents it to Nash.

"Here!"

Nash smiles at the little creature who is attempting to hurl itself out of Will's grasp.

"Whoa! Grab him!"

Will places the puppy into Nash's arms and stands back his eyes starry with anticipation.

" Look! He already knows he's yours!"

The puppy, demented with excitement, attacks Nash's face with its tongue, whining, and growling and yipping.

Nash looks astonished for moment then bursts into tears.

"Heee's miiiine?!" He warbles, brushing his face against the fat, furry body while the puppy ecstatically licks his tears with a tiny, pink tongue.

"Uh, huh! All yours forever and ever!" Will feels like he might burst with happiness.

"He's mine?!" Nash looks to Maggie for confirmation and she nods.

"When Mr. Lecter asked if you could have a dog, we told him so long as he doesn't live here, you could."

"But where will he live? "

The puppy, bored with licking begins to nip Nash's chin and nose."Ahhh! He's biting me! He's tickling me!"

The group laughs.

"He'll live with Mr. Lecter so you could see him every day when you go to work," Marco assures him.

Frank and Will share a knowing look.

Hannibal had been less than enthusiastic about the prospect of harboring a puppy. But when Will had spied the little spotted dog at the shelter, he instinctively knew he had found the perfect antidote for Nash's lingering sadness.

"He's just like Boscoe!" Will crows. "Remember? Like in that picture you showed me!"

"Boscoe!" Nash's face lights up. "That was my dog when I was little!"

"Bet he's going to be just like 'em! A little fatter maybe," Will laughs and gently pokes the puppy's round tummy. "He's a real, butterball! And guess what?"

Nash looks at Will, dazed by so many riches; first donuts and then a puppy!

"What?"

"I got a dog too!"

Nash's eyes go round in surprise then they dart around the parking lot.

"Where? Where?" He demands, then kisses his puppy's soot-colored head.

"He just got fixed so he's not ready to go home until Tuesday."

"He got fixed..." Nash echoes attempting to recall what that means.

Will protectively covers the puppy's ears and gets nipped with needle-sharp teeth for his trouble.

"Owww! It means he got his balls cut off," he whispers and pulls his hands away to safety.

"Ohhh," Nash says and speculatively regards the little morsel nestled against his chest."Do I have to do that with him?"

"Not yet," Frank assures him. "But soon as he's big enough, he'll go to the vet and they'll take care of it."

"Okay," Nash nods and rubs his face against the dog's soft fur.

"What're you going to name him?" Will wants to know.

Nash looks doubtfully at Hannibal.

"Do you think it's okay if I don't call him Boscoe?"

"Of course! You may call him any name you choose."

"Then," Nash smiles softly and kisses the puppy's wet nose," I'm going to name him Richard." He immediately turns a concerned face to Hannibal.

"Do you think that's okay?"

Hannibal's mind flashes to Richard, bleeding to death in a deserted Parisian hotel room.

"A cur's name for a cur. Imitation certainly is the sincerest form of flattery."

Will turns and frowns up into Hannibal's face and Hannibal silently curses his own lack of discretion.

He smiles charmingly.

"I think Richard would have liked that very much," he agrees and Nash smiles with relief.

"What's your dog's name?" Nash asks Will as he gently strokes his dog's head with a proprietary air.

"I'm not sure yet, but I think I'll call him...Nigel?" Will deadpans while closely monitoring Hannibal's reaction.

Hannibal's eyes crinkle but he says nothing. Frank on the other hand frowns and shakes his head disapprovingly.

"None a' that young man," Frank chides him.

Hannibal appears thoughtful.

" Wait a moment, Frank. It could very well be that Nigel would appreciate a dog named after him!"

Hannibal winks at Will.

"See, dad?" Will protests with a wide-eyed innocent act neither man buys. "Even Mr. Lecter thinks so! But I would *never* give my dog *that* name! I'm gonna call him...Hambone!"

Frank can't help but smile appreciatively; his favorite boyhood dog was, after all, "Hambone The First."

"Hambone the Third, huh? Sounds good!" He agrees enjoying how happy Nash, his boy, and even Hannibal seem to be at this moment.

"Hambone..." Nash says meditatively."Hambone...hey Will? We should eat those donuts now!"

Will looks hopefully at Frank and then at Hannibal.

"How many do we get?"

"One," both men answer in unison and smile conspiratorially at one another.

"One! That's not fair!" Will argues and has to scratch the puppy to soothe his disappointment.

"That's okay!" Nash says seeing that Will is upset."We can eat one now, and then another one later! That way we won't get a belly ache!"

Will smiles and holds one of the puppy's soft, wee paws between his fingers. "You're right Nash! That's smart of you to figure that out."

Nash beams with pride then turns to allow the aides to pet Richard.

Maggie and Marco fuss over the dog for a few minutes before Maggie addresses Nash.

"If you want, you can bring him inside. You just need to keep him in the common room and let everyone who wants a turn hold him."

Nash frowns and protectively lays a large hand over the puppy's head.

"I don't know...maybe I should just keep him out here. Jim is rough sometimes, and Mr. Bertilucci doesn't like animals."

"Alright, Nash, you're in charge of your own dog, so it's whatever you want," Marco says soothingly.

"I'm gonna go start setting up for dinner. Bye Will! Bye Nash! You got a good dog there!"

Hannibal turns to Maggie.

"We were hoping to have Nash as our guest for dinner tonight."

"Dinner? That should be fine. What time would you have him back?"

"No later than nine-thirty," Hannibal promises."Is that is acceptable?"

Maggie looks quizzically at Nash who fervently nods. "Then I can feed Richard and put him to bed!" He enthuses.

"And you can begin his potty training," Hannibal adds dryly, already begrudging his role as in situ dog owner.

" *Charmetrold*!" Hannibal thinks looking benevolently at Will. "*He certainly knows how to work me!"*

Will glances up from the puppy to find Hannibal watching him. He grins back cockily, fully aware of the man's lack of enthusiasm for his new canine companion.

"What are we having for dinner Mr. Lecter?" He wonders as he helps himself to a chocolate glazed donut from the box.

"A guest never asks, and a host never tells. It would spoil the surprise," Hannibal replies pompously.

"Piz-haa?" Will hazards both a guess and a suggestion with his mouth stuffed full of chocolate-covered dough.

"You know better than that boy! Chew 'n swallow afore you speak!" Frank scolds as he waves away the proffered box.

Hannibal has recently convinced Frank to begin a renal diet and being unable to indulge has left Frank feeling a little cranky.

With a mighty effort Will chews and swallows.

"Sorry dad! But could we please have pizza Mr. Lecter? Nash?!" He turns to enlist the guest of honor's support." You like pizza, right?"

Nash ponders the question while finishing his sprinkle donut.

"I like pizza but I don't like stuff on it."

"Stuff?"

"Yeah, 'stuff.' Like: anchovies, onions, peppers, ham, pineapple, olives, mushrooms..." He pauses, "And sausage!"

"What do you like on your pizza?" Will wonders.

"Pepperoni and jalapeños. When do I get to feed Richard? He wanted to eat my donut!"

"Let's get him back to my home first, then we'll go over everything we need to do for Richard," Hannibal promises.

"And eat pizza?" Unlike Will, Nash's question is not a hint, he's too enamored with Richard at the moment to care about anything as prosaic as pizza.

"And eat pizza," Hannibal agrees resignedly.

Will tries and fails to suppress a gleeful smile of triumph.

Hannibal and Will are walking back from the pizzeria, having volunteered to pick-up the pies.

It's a mild spring night and there is just enough breeze to stir the trees' tender, new, foliage.

Will sniffs the air appreciably like a young colt.

"Have you ever wondered how I came to choose the name for my bookshop ?" Hannibal asks out of the blue.

"No," Will admits. "Is it cuz books are like castles for your mind?" He turns his head, all the better to inhale the delicious scents wafting from the tower of boxes Hannibal is carrying.

Back at the restaurant, Will had argued he could hold at least one of the pizzas for the three block walk, but Hannibal had forbade him; determining they were much too hot for the child to hold.

"*Hmph, I could have done it*!" He thinks resentfully.

"No, but that is a good guess...Will? Are you paying attention?" Hannibal demands, aware he has lost his audience to the allure of pepperoni fumes.

"Yes!"

Will understands that this topic of conversation is important to Hannibal but the scent of pizza is *so* distracting.

"I was explaining to you how I choose the name for my store. The term "Mind Palace" is a modern term for an ancient technique used by the Greeks and Romans to aid memorization and recall. A way of creating a visual map, or memory-room if you like. A person can create an imaginary house in their mind, and fill it full of all the things which are important to them, such as people, places, sights, and smells."

"Really? Will remarks disinterestedly hoping he'll be allowed to eat a minimum of five slices; Tony has bragged that his record is eight.

"Yes. And because a good book can effectively open worlds in a reader's mind, I named my store after that technique."

"Cool. Do you do that? Remember things like that?" Will asks his interest finally piqued.

Hannibal's nods."I do."

"Huh. Is it a map or a room?" The boy wonders.

"Neither. It is a vast and elaborate palace."

Will smiles, at though Hannibal is pulling his leg. "A palace? How many rooms does it have?" He asks jokingly.

"Hundreds? Perhaps thousands?" Hannibal's smile becomes circumspect at Will's surprise.

"You know, I can find both you and your father there; Nash as well."

"I'm there?" Will seems astonished at the concept."What am I doing there!?"

Hannibal doesn't want to spook the boy, so he doesn't admit that dozens of his Mind Palace's rooms contain tableaus dedicated to "Will Graham."

"You are there in a room identical to the break room of my store, sitting at a table, working your way through a pile of sandwiches and a thick stack of books," he teases.

"Pffft!" Will replies, irritable from embarrasment. "That's weird!"

Hannibal chuckles at the childish response but also senses cogs and wheels spinning beneath that mop of hair.

"What about...bad things?" Will asks with manufactured nonchalance as he watches Hannibal's face.

Hannibal nods.

"Ahhhhh...yes...'the bad things.'"

He regards Will sadly

"Of course, there are rooms filled with those as well, locked and double-barred."

Will stops short.

"You can do that? You can lock- up the bad stuff so it can't hurt you?"

Hannibal stops and swivels to face him; Will is too young and vulnerable to be carrying the weight of his gift alone.

"Those most of all Will," he confirms gravely. "And if you like, I can teach you how."

Will's looks confused, and relieved, and lost all at the same time and Hannibal resents the boxes which prevent him from pulling the boy into his arms to comfort him.

"Okay...that would be good," Will agrees cautiously and begins to walk again.

"A wise decision," Hannibal praises and Will grins bashfully.

They stroll in companionable silence for another block before Will's voice pipes up again, small, troubled, and uncertain.

"Mr. Lecter?"

"Hmmm?"

"Is... is my dad going to die?" Will's face is deliberately averted.

Hannibal has been expecting this question, sooner or later.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because he doesn't seem to be getting any better."

Will has stopped again and is already turning away, but not before Hannibal notices that his narrow chest is heaving.

Hannibal balances the pizza boxes with one arm and wraps the other around Will's shoulders.

Will immediately leans into Hannibal, pressing his face against the man's chest, and begins to weep; he's drowning in a sea of fears he's been flailing in ever since Frank's accident.

Hannibal steers them away from the center of the sidewalk and rests the boxes onto the hood of a parked car. Then he wraps his arms around Will and pulls him in tight. He finds if he tilts

his head down, he can hook his chin over the top of Will's head until the boy is completely encased by his body.

Then he waits.

Hannibal waits until he feels the exact moment Will's grief abates and is replaced by self consciousness. He squeezes the boy reassuringly once more and Will detaches himself from the cocoon of Hannibal's embrace.

"It's alright, Prins," Hannibal croons, placing his hands on either side of Will's face.

Grudgingly the boy looks up and Hannibal thumbs away the trail of tears streaking his flushed cheeks.

"No it's not! And I hate crying!"

And though Will pulls away, he finds he is already missing the comfort he'd enjoyed in Hannibal's arms. Encircled there, Will had experienced a maelstrom of emotions he hadn't in a long time; the duality of being young and helpless but also safe, protected, and sheltered.

Worse of all, being with Hannibal has reawakened Will's most shameful secret; his resentful anger towards Frank for no longer being the strong and healthy daddy capable of protecting and safeguarding him.

Ashamed, bewildered, and overcome with guilt, Will drops his head and freezes.

"First of all," Hannibal rests a light hand on the boy's shoulder," your father is not going to die."

Will refuses to meet Hannibal's eyes.

"How do you know?"Will hisses bitterly, wishing he was six years old again and all of this was just a bad dream he would soon be waking from.

Hannibal's hand on his shoulder tightens and instinctively, Will looks up.

The man's face is eerily motionless, even his eyes don't move and Will would have backed away but for the hand holding him in place. Will finds he can't tear his gaze away from those deep set eyes; eyes which even the street lamp's illumination can't plumb the depths of.

"Because...I won't let him." The man's voice is sonorous and low and the strength and certainty of it pulses through the boy like a current of electricity.

"Promise?" Will asks shakily.

Hannibal grasps Will's hand in his and squeezes.

"I Promise."

Chapter End Notes

No dead daddies- this ain't Lion King!

"Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery."
Charles Caleb Colton

renal diet- for people with kidney disfunctions

Prins- "Prince"

He's baaack

Chapter Summary

Frank and Hannibal prepare for Lavinia's dinner party. Nigel calls Hannibal and begins his new business venture.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Maybe you should of asked Mr. Lecter for some help," Will says dubiously when Frank appears from the bathroom freshly shaven and dressed for Lavinia's dinner party.

"What's wrong with me?" Frank demands looking down at his outfit.

Will wrinkles his nose. He's sitting cross-legged with Hambone the third in his lap; the dog looks up at Frank and pants approvingly.

"See? Hambone likes it!" Frank protests and pulls on the sleeves of his dress shirt.

"The shirt's too big, the tie's too wide and they don't even go together! Where'd you 'em from anyway? The pantry?"

"Yup!" Frank says looking proudly at his bizarre mix of styles and designs. "Polyester; so's they don't wrinkle. Miracle fabric."

"Isn't Mr. Lecter going?"

"Yes. Why?"

Will takes Hambone's head into his hands and kisses him repeatedly." Muah! Muah! Muah!" Then he looks critically at his father." Cuz if he's there, he's going to look hot and the woman's gonna like him better!"

If Frank had a mouthful of water, he would have spit it out.

"This ain't that kinda party!" Frank admonishes his precocious son. "*Least ways I hope not."*

"Lavinia is trying to set you up dad," Will's tone drips with thinly- veiled sarcasm."Don't you want a girlfriend? Even Nash has a girlfriend!"

Even I have a boyfriend and I'm only thirteen is the unspoken comment that lingers in the air between them.

Frank snorts and Hambone cocks his head; alarmed at the unfamiliar sound.

"Hambone agrees. Don'cha boy? Don'cha good boy!?"

"*Good-bye!*" Frank says, grabbing his keys. He feels like he's off to a root canal; one he can't afford the good drugs for. "Don't open the door, and stay in the apartment."

"I know, I know," Will chants. He and Anthony have already made plans to screen-chat with their school-issued laptops; so the night's not going to be a total waste."Say 'hi' to Lavinia and Mr. Lecter for me, and take a picture of the woman, I wanna see what she looks like!"

"I'm not gonna take a picture of a strange lady, son." Frank's hand is on the doorknob and he's impatiently churning the change in his pocket; a nervous tick.

"Just pretend you're calling me and take one! Kids do it all the time... it's fine!"

"Nooo," Frank drawls slowly and emphatically at his young son; just the idea of a strange woman catching him in the act of taking a photo of her makes the back of his neck sweat. *"On second thought maybe it is this shirt's fabric,"* he concedes, running a finger along the inside of his collar. "*Lord have mercy! I have a bad feeling about this."*

Will laughs at his dad's expression then feels sorry for the guy.

"You'll do fine, go get 'em tiger!" He says, repeating a line he'd heard in a movie once.

"Gee... thanks," Frank says dryly and yanks open the door. "Don't forget to...."

"Lock the door after you, don't open it, and don't leave the apartment! I'm just gonna let Hambone out to pee then I'll lock everything up again!"

Will follows Frank out to the sidewalk where Hambone happily lifts his leg to every three dimensional object within range.

"Looks like he's set. I'll let him out one more time when I get home. Goodnight son."

" Nite, dad!"

Frank waits until Will is back in the building before setting-off.

Neither he nor his son has noticed the man watching them from a car; Frank is too preoccupied with his own worries, and Will is humming with excitement about having the place to himself.

Nigel grins.

"*So this is where the little prick lives? What're the odds?"*

Will runs Hambone up to his apartment, unlocks the door, darts inside, then immediately locks it.

He smiles down at the dog who thumps his tail appreciatively on the floor.

"Well boy? Looks like we finally got the place to ourselves! Let's go get a snack then call Tony!"

"Hi!"

"Hey. Will, this is my little brother Francisco."

"Hey," Will says. Tony's apartment is loud with background noise, a small girl wanders over to the screen, drawn by the light.

"Dora!" She demands.

"No!...Mom!! Can you tell the kids to get out of my room!? I'm trying to do a project with a friend!"

"It's my room too!" Francisco protests."Mooom! They aren't doing homework! They're just talking!"

Will has to wait another ten minutes until the tumult dies down on Tony's side. By then they've both wised-up and pulled-out their history books for authenticity's sake.

"Two more weeks!" Will crows. "I can't wait!"

"Me too! Then we'll be outta there! Are you gonna go to St. Iggy next year?"

"Yeah, I think so, if we can get the scholarship. What 'bout you?"

"Not sure. My parents were talking about sending me to a Tech cuz I want to be an engineer."

Tony has spoken about his career plan before but Will had never known it would affect his attendance at St. Ignacio's high school.

"Really? Where?"

"Not 'round here. I'll probably stay with my grandma; use her address. So, what's going on? Is your dad on his date?"

"Yeah, he left half an hour ago," Will's disappointment from Tony's revelation doesn't go unnoticed.

"Don't worry about it man! We have all summer to hang! Wait...are you gonna get your job back?"

Will sighs; he's already missing the extra income.

"No...but I take care of Nash's dog for Mr. Lecter so I get paid for that."

"Fuck...you get paid to play with a dog? White people are so weird man!"

Will laughs. Somehow, Tony always finds a way to jolly him into a good mood whenever he's upset or worried; he's great that way.

"You gonna work in your uncle's shop again?" Will asks, hoping to distract himself from his new worry.

"Of course! He's not gonna pass-up on slave labor! Franco's gonna start too. Then with that math class and soccer; its' gonna be a busy summer."

"Yeah." Will's mood has plummeted again, he just can't help himself.

Francisco has returned, yelling something about a 'deal' and clamoring for the use of the laptop.

"Hey, Will? Franco has convinced my mom he needs a turn. Sorry, but I gotta go." Tony looks sourly at his brother who smiles triumphantly; his little face is a tinier, smugger, version of Tony's.

"Sure... whatever, see ya!"

"Bye!" Francisco calls, face crowding Tony's out, and in spite himself Will laughs.

"Bye Francisco. Bye Tony," Will closes the laptop feeling sad and lonely. It's times like these he's glad he has Hambone.

"Just you and me boy. Let's go work on your tricks."

They spend the rest of the night perfecting Hambone's commands then fall asleep together watching Youtube videos.

"So...have you calmed the fuck down yet?"

"Nigel. You're still in town?" Hannibal frowns thoughtfully, placing his phone on speaker as he skillfully knots his tie.

"Yes. We good?"

"We are so long as you behave."

"Behave? What am I? Fucking five?" Nigel takes a lungful of unfiltered Camel.

Fucking heaven.

"What is it you want?"

"Nothing. Well...maybe a little of your time. A couple minutes of your valuable time...I have a business proposition."

"No." Hannibal fastnens his belt and checks the fit of his slacks; they fit snuggly around the curves of his toned ass. He pulls open his dresser, mulling over his pocket square collection.

"Fuck. When did you become *farmor!?"*

"I wasn't aware I was. I need to go Nigel."

"Oh, yes? Going out?"

"Yes. Stay away from my property."

Nigel chuckles throatily. Hannibal hears him take another drag.

"You really should think about quitting," he comments disinterestedly, tilting his head as he holds a possible contender against his tie.

"It's on the list. So...when do I get to spend time with my *storebror*? I'm leaving in a few days and I'd like to at least have one last meal with you."

"The Last Supper?" Hannibal pulls on his suit jacket and gathers his wallet and keys.

"In my line of work, you never can tell."

Hannibal shakes his head at this brother's fruitless attempt at manipulation. He walks downstairs and activates his alarms and security light systems.

"We'll see...*Godna, bisse*," Hannibal says with unexpected warmth and Nigel smiles.

"*Godna, storebror*." Nigel hangs up and turns his attention to his backseat where two boys have been waiting nervously.

"Here," he says, handing them each a duffle bag. "It's got everything you'll need. You fuck with me," he points a finger at the larger boy, " I will end you. But first," he points at the younger child," I'll make you watch while I end your families."

Nigel points a finger at his temple." **Boom! Boom! Boom**!"

Both boys flinch; the younger one's eyes fill with tears.

" Do you understand?"

The elder of the two nods and yanks his cousin's arm.

"We get it. Right?"

The other boy nods; eyes huge.

"Good. I knew from the moment I saw you, you were smart boys. You're doing a good thing; taking care of your family like this."

The boys nod in unison. "*Like a couple of fucking puppets*." Nigel smirks, "*My puppets*."

"Okay, okay, get the fuck outta here...and be careful. I can't pay you if you're dead."

Chapter End Notes

Can you find the easter eggs I've left scattered around?
Homages to S3, "Hannibal", and Star Wars.

So...I've purposely written Tony and his family as speaking English since they're second and third generation-they're bilingual, but the kids choose to speak English- just a choice based on personal experience- not meant to be a political or social statement of any kind.

• Farmor = Paternal grandmother
storebror- elder brother
Godna- goodnight

The dinner party

Chapter Summary

Frank attends the dinner party with Hannibal.
Later, Nigel pays Frank a visit.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

As Frank expected, Lavinia's dinner is turning-out to be a mixed bag.

On the plus side, Hannibal has regaled the company with tales from his "impetuous youth" which Frank finds very entertaining.

On the down side, an ugly competitive streak's been awakened in Lavinia. She's announced she's bound and determined to " challenge Hannibal's rôle as resident *raconteur*."

Consequently, for the past twenty minutes her captive audience has been treated to lurid details of her hippy days spent on a Maine commune.

"Every night I'd screw a different man," she crows appreciatively; eyes starry from recollections of bygone times.

She turns conspiratorially to Frank and captures him with a gimlet eye. "I got the worse case of clap! But of course none of us wanted to rely on Western medicine..." She turns to her friend Gail who smiles wanly."Too bad for us; our grasp of Eastern remedies was just as tenuous..." she winks at Hannibal who beams in response," ...so let's just say, it was the gift that kept on giving!"

Lavinia explodes in a gale of raucous laughter. Gail glances at Frank, shaking her head and laughing sympathetically.

Frank gulps down Hannibal's excellent wine.

"Would you like some more?" Hannibal asks solicitously; he is having a marvelous time.

"Better not," Frank replies in an undertone; Lavinia is off again, this time describing a Walkabout in the Australian outback." I think I'll need my wits about me."

Hannibal laughs appreciatively and helps himself to another half-glass.

"Now...who's having dessert?" Lavinia demands. "Gail brought a delicious pear tartlet which she slaved over all afternoon." Lavinia's roving eye settles on Frank and her smiles brightens,

encouraging him to comment.

Frank clears his throat and drinks nervously from his empty glass.

"Oh, yes," Gail laughs, rising with her empty dinner plate," I had to beat my way through a crowd of hipsters at Whole Foods for it." She shudders dramatically and holds out her hand for Frank's plate," I think I'm suffering from PTSD; I know I'll have flashbacks," she whispers rolling her eyes.

"Oh, don't mind her," Lavinia flippantly remarks to Frank. " She's a smart ass, but her beef bourguignon is worth stabbing a nun for...no...wait... I take that back...maybe just a priest!" She cackles at her own joke.

Hannibal laughs at Frank's expression of quiet desperation; he suspects something stronger than two glasses of wine would be needed to get his friend through this dinner.

"That sounds delicious," he says turning to Gail. "Which cut of beef do you prefer?"

"Let me take those," Frank jumps to his feet and pulls the plates from Gail's hand. "You just relax while Lavinia and I take care of this."

"Oh... alright," Gail agrees, surprised but happy to give the man his space. For more than an hour now, she's suspected she is not the guest Frank has eyes for.

Happily oblivious, Frank buses the table while Gail and Hannibal trade recipes and favorite meals. On his final trip to the kitchen, he finds Lavinia waiting for him, arms crossed.

"Hey buster! What do you think you're doing...hmmm? No! Don't answer that. Just get back out there! This evening is for you! Or have you forgotten?!"

She smacks Frank's ass playfully with one hand as she pulls Chantilly cream out of her refrigerator with the other.

"Now...be a good boy and go out there and find out who wants tea and who wants coffee...but don't come back until you've told Gail you would love to see her again." Lavinia points to the other room and gives Frank a helpful shove,

"There! Go! Go get your "Girl Friday!"

Two hours later, Frank cracks open the apartment door to find a small, wet nose pushing furiously against it.

"Hey there! Looks like you need to go out!"

"Dad?" Will calls and soon appears around the corner looking groggy in a rumpled t-shirt and sweats.

"Hey!" Frank calls softly. "Sorry to wake you, buddy. Why don't you grab me the leash and I'll take the pup out one last time?"

"Okay, hold on."

Will grabs the leash and hands it to Frank who connects it with difficulty to the squirming, dog's collar. "Okay...okay, let's go."

Down on the sidewalk, Frank is waiting for Hambone to finish marking all his favorite landmarks when his eye is drawn to a red glow.

He swivels his head for a closer look and sees the light is the lit end of a cigarette; its owner a dark figure leaned against a parked car. Then the tip of the cigarette flares bright orange, and in its glow, Frank makes out the sharp features of a man. Lazy curlicues of smoke drift above his head. The warm, homey scent of tobacco tickles Frank's nose.

"Hello!" the man calls over in an oddly familiar voice.

Frank fully turns to address the speaker.

"Good evening," he says keenly aware of his own physical limitations. "Waiting for someone?" He scans their surroundings; so far as he can tell, they're alone.

A laugh jettison's a cloud of smoke from the stranger's mouth, obscuring his features. Only the man's eyes remain visible, deep set and glittering in the street lamp.

Frank's stomach plummets; he's in the presence of danger.

Slowly and casually, he backs up until he finds the stone railing; it's some comfort he supposes that his back is protected.

"Goodnight," he says, and begins to slowly ascend the stairs backwards.

Unhappy that his adventure is being cut short, Hambone whines and resists Frank's attempt to rein him in.

"You know you really shouldn't pull him like that," the stranger admonishes as he throws his cigarette onto the ground," you could damage his neck."

The man pushes himself off the parked car and walks towards Frank who steels himself.

But the man stops five feet away, and simply looks up into his face. Frank blinks in surprise, and then his eyes narrow and his hands automatically form tight fists.

"You must be Nigel."

Nigel puts out his hand as though daring Frank to step down and take it.

Frank doesn't. "And you are here...why?"

Nigel withdraws his hand and pulls a pack of Camel's out of his shirt pocket. Frank examines the shirt with interest. It's patterned with a bizarre dachshund design; the sort of thing you might see on a Miami Beach full of retirees.

"I'm here... Frank..." Frank frowns; this man knows too much about him."Because my brother isn't speaking to me at the moment, and I need a friend."

Nigel places a cigarette in his mouth then closes the gap to offer Frank the package with a questioning look. Frank surprises even himself when he accepts the offer; freeing a cigarette, and placing it into the corner of his mouth.

Nigel smiles appreciatively and strikes a match, lighting his smoke before offering it to Frank.

Frank uses Nigel's cigarette to light his own then returns it. He takes a pull and exhales, squinting from the smoke.

"Why aren't you two on speaking terms?"

"That's a very personal question Frank. And not what should be concerning you at the moment."

Frank looks into Nigel's eyes and smiles.

"Guess you're right 'bout that. Thanks for the smoke. Goodnight..." Frank flicks his cigarette over the railing then stands, waiting.

"You won't hear what I have to say?"

Frank is considering how to answer that when Will's voice calls softly from an upstairs window.

"Dad? Who are you talking with?...are you *smoking*?!"

Nigel's whole face lights-up with delight; Frank's closes like a trap door.

"Get away from the window! I'm coming up now!" He barks, eyes fixed on Nigel.

"Hello Will! I've just been speaking with your father..." Nigel's canines gleam in the light," ...no cause for alarm!"

Smiling happily, Nigel begins to walk backwards; the better to catch a glimpse of the boy in the lit window.

But Will is already out of sight, crouched on the floor; something about his father's voice sending him there without hesitation.

Nigel waits for a moment, but when the boy fails to appear he calls up, "Good night!"

A neighbor's voice responds.

"Shut the fuck up! My kid's trying to sleep up here!"

Nigel laughs again before turning and loping away to his car. He opens the unlocked door then looks back at Frank, tilting his head.

"Hannibal always did have strange taste in men," he calls, his tone unmistakingly mocking. "Let's hope for Will's sake you don't end-up like the last one!" Nigel slides into his car and guns the engine. The car peels out of the parking space in a cloud of exhaust and tire smoke.

Frank is suddenly aware he is sweating and his fists ache from being clenched.

"Is he gone?"

Will is behind him now, hovering at the open front door.

Frank swears and bolts up the remaining stairs with the dog in tow. He wraps his arms around his son and shoves them both inside and slams the door shut. Frank pulls Will in front urging him up the stairs without speaking. He doesn't stop until they are both inside the apartment and he's thrown the bolt. Then he turns to his panting, frightened boy.

"You shoulda stayed up here!"

"What did he want?"

"Not sure...but you don't need to worry 'bout it. I'll call Mr. Lecter; let him know what's going on." Frank frowns. "How many more days 'till school's out?"

"Eight. We get out the thirtieth."

"Alright...we'll see...we'll see..."

"What's going on!?"

Frank puts his arms around his son's shoulders and hands him Hambone's leash.

"Family squabble. But those can be powder kegs."

"Is Mr. Lecter in danger? We should warn him!" Will looks over his shoulder at the window imagining Nigel standing on the sidewalk below.

"Shhh, it's alright, bubba. Didn't mean to scare you. I'll call Mr. Lecter after you get Hambone some water. Then back in bed."

"Fine," Will huffs, going to the kitchen and refilling Hambone's bowl. "But, dad?"

"Yes?"

"Don't you think tonight proves I need a phone?!"

Frank takes his phone from his pocket and seats himself in his chair before looking over at his son.

"How'd you figure?"

"Cuz if Nigel had...shot you or something..." Will frowns as Frank snorts derisively, and hurries on," ...I couldn't dial 911. I need a phone dad! Purely for security reasons! And I'll pay for it by myself...soon as I have enough money saved."

Frank nods his head as he dials Hannibal's cell." Well...you make a solid argument son. I'll think about it."

Will hugs Hambone who raises a dripping, interested muzzle to the boy's face.

"Hear that Hammy? I'm gonna get a phone!"

"Shhhh! It's ringing. Go on into your room."

"Awww! Dad!" On Hannibal's end, Will hears a barely perceptible 'hello?'

"Hannibal! Frank Graham...Will? I mean it...git! Sorry 'bout that," Frank apologizes to his friend while scowling at his son who is slowly walking backwards.

"*William James Graham,* do I have to take my belt to you?!"

Will's eyes bug-out at his father's threat; he turns and darts into his room, pulling Hambone along with him and slamming the door behind them.

"I'm sorry to call this late."

"Not at all, everything alright?"

"I'm not sure. Your brother came by; left not five minutes ago."

"Nigel came to your apartment?" All the warmth in Hannibal's voice is gone; leached-out by Frank's news.

"No, just waited outside. Did you mention to him where we live? He knew my name."

" No. What did he want?"

"An ear. Told me you were refusing to speak with him; that he needed a friend."

It speaks much about Hannibal's self control that he laughs, when what he'd prefer to do is grab his Glock and go hunting.

Nigel has crossed his final line.

"Well," he says making his voice rich with amusement for Frank's sake. "He is looking for a partner in a new business scheme, but I've already told him no."

"I see...never do business with friends or family?"

"Exactly. But, of course Nigel doesn't see it that way. I would rather keep my brother's good opinion of me than risk the chance of losing it for the sake of a little more money."

"I understand. And I have to say..." Frank pauses, remembering Nigel's cryptic comment about Richard.

Hannibal tenses, wondering what's to come. "...you're making a wise decision," Frank adds; summarily dismissing Nigel's warnings.

Hannibal feels a palpable sense of relief; Frank has no idea what is really going on.

"Well, thank you for your vote of confidence," Hannibal says, dipping his head modestly as though Frank is present. "I'll tell him to please leave my friends alone; if he wants to speak with me, he can come to me directly."

"Thank you; I was gonna call the police..." Hannibal's self congratulatory smile slips a notch," ...but I figured I'd call you first, let you handle it behind the scenes so to speak. But if I see any dealing goin' on 'round here..." Hannibal's faint eyebrows rise; maybe Frank perceives more than he thought, "I'll be making sure his ass gets put on ice."

Hannibal's laugh this time is a natural one.

"Well, Frank. If that were the case, which I don't believe it is, I would expect nothing less from you. Will's safety is paramount. For both of us."

"Thank you Hannibal. That reminds me; I wanted to ask you a question, but I want you to take your time 'fore you answer it."

"Alright," Hannibal agrees, rapidly reviewing possible scenarios and appropriate responses.

"I would like you to consider becoming Will's legal guardian."

Chapter End Notes

I'm getting close to the end of the first act of this story.(I guess you could call this the slowest burn in the history of fan fic.)

I don't usually beg for comments, but I'm asking for them now.

Specifically, I'm curious what readers are predicting/expecting in the next few chapters?

I'd truly appreciate the feed back.- it helps keep me on the right track- since I don't have a beta.

Thanks!
---

clap- Gonorrhea
Girl Friday- an old Spencer/Hepburn movie

The Reluctant Houseguest

Chapter Summary

Will and Tony go on a bike ride and have a fight. Will visits Hannibal at his store.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sitting in his apartment, Hannibal finds he's been staring at his own reflection in the darkened window without realizing it.

"I've been making a living trust."

"I see...I'm flattered and honored...but..."

"I'm not dying," Frank hurries on with a little chuckle and Hannibal breaths an inaudible sigh of relief." But I've begun dialysis...and I've been on the registry for a new kidney for a year now without so much as a nibble," Frank laughs hollowly.

"I'm sorry. How long does it take..."

"Months...years even."

Hannibal's heart sinks to his polished shoes " Isn't a genetic match required?" So far as he understands, Frank and Will are alone in the world.

"Actually, that's no longer true; wonders of modern medicine, though of course that would be ideal."

"Could Will..."

"No. Will is too young, but even if he weren't, I wouldn't want him to."

"Better to give up a kidney than lose a father," Hannibal argues sagely.

Frank's eyes sting and he blinks rapidly. He holds his phone away and chocks down a sob; Hannibal hears it anyway and his fingers tighten on his phone.

Frank pulls himself together and brings the phone back to his mouth. "That's very true," he agrees with another humorless laugh. "This is all worst case scenario stuff at any rate."

"Yes. Good to be prepared," Hannibal is willing to play along for the sake of his friend's ego.

"So...would you think about it? "

"Yes, I'll do it."

A beat of silence passes between them.

"Yes, you'll think about it? Or yes you'll agree to become Will's guardian if I...?"

"The latter. I'm honored you would ask me."

Frank's head is suddenly too heavy for his neck to support and he allows it to flop onto the chair's back. He closes his eyes and silently offers a prayer of thanks. His voice is husky when he speaks again.

"Thank you Hannibal...that... that is a load off my mind...thank you."

"I hope it never becomes necessary."

"You and me both, sir, " Frank laughs again, but with relief this time, " you and me both."

After Frank's one, strange confrontation with Hannibal's twin, the topic of Nigel has never been broached by either man.

Gradually, days then weeks pass, and Will's fear that Nigel might pop-out at any moment lessens, then dies away altogether.

Both father and son assume the man has gone home to Europe, never to return.

It's the first Saturday of summer vacation and Will and Tony are drinking Icee's as they bike lazily around the school's neighborhood; Hambone loping alongside Will at the end of his leash.

"When do you start work at your uncle's store?"

Will brakes as Hambone encounters an irresistible smell for the millionth time that day.

"Monday. He says he's 'givin' me the weekend off.' Asshole."

Tony stops and watches as Hambone marks a tree.

"Shit! Where does it all come from? Does he have a tank up his ass?"

"He's like a camel!" Will laughs."Aren't cha boy?"

Hambone pants happily and wags his tail.

"Hey! Wanna go see Richard?"

"Who?"

"Richard, my old boss' dog...well not his dog exactly, but it lives with him."

"Nah..." Tony flings some of his bright-blue Icee at Will who ducks, narrowly managing to avoid it.

"Shit! Cut it out! So...what do you wanna do?"

Tony's smile melts off his face and he looks away. When he finally looks back at Will, he's serious.

"What?"

Tony pushes his bike towards Will and leans down, pretending to examine its chain.

"I wanna go to your house and suck you off," he purrs in a husky voice.

Will jerks back with shock, his penis immediately hardening.

"Fuck, Tony!" He groans, trying to discretely adjust himself. "You know we can't do that!"

"Why not? Your dad's not home."

That was true, Frank was at one of his thrice weekly dialysis sessions.

"So!? I'm not supposed to have you over!"

Tony's eyes narrow.

"How come? Cuz I'm *Dominican?!"*

"What?! No! It's ...cuz... cuz he knows I like you and he doesn't want us to hook-up!" He says apologetically.

"Wait..." Tony's face has gone still and hard and Will's stomach drops." He knows...about us?" Tony's sudden rage freezes Will in place.

"Y...yes."

"Fuck! What the hell you'd do that for?!...**Fuck!"**

"I'm sorry...I..."

"Do you **know** what will happen to me if my parents...**Fuck***!"* Anthony turns hard, unfriendly eyes towards Will who flinches. "I thought I could **trust** you!"

Will knows Tony's pain is fueled by fear, he can feel the other boy's rising panic, but he's unable to think rationally under the weight of those accusing eyes.

"You can! He's not going to say anything! I'll tell him not to!"

" **Goddamn son of a bitch!"**

Anthony's rage pours over Will in a red hot torrent and two passing ladies frown disapprovingly, muttering to one another about ' language.'

Will avoids their stares by looking away; Tony appears oblivious to them.

"I'm sorry! What should we do?" Will pleads in a tiny voice.

Anthony's rage is dissipating, replaced by fear and dread; Will feels it's foulness coat his mouth like a greasy film. He wonders if Anthony is going to puke.

"I guess..." Tony raises haunted eyes to Will and his expression of hopelessness is almost too much to bear,"...we're done."

The air in Will's lungs turn to lead.

"Wha'...what do you mean?"

"It means," Tony rests his foot on his bike's pedal and grips the handlebars," we can't hang-out anymore...I can't be friends with you."

"Tony..." Will breathes the name out, like a drowning man's last air bubble exiting his lungs.

Tony refuses to look at him. "Sorry, man...I...you just don't get it..."

Tony pushes off the ground and is gone.

Tony's gone.

Tony's...

Hambone yanks on the leash and the world comes crashes back into focus; a rushing cacophony of sounds and smells and textures: a car is honking, two men are laughing , exhaust fumes, the scent of freshly mowed grass, and hot asphalt fill Will's lungs as he takes a stuttering breath.

His face feels strangely cold; it's summer, why is his face cold? Instinctively he brushes his cheeks with his fingers and feels the slickness of tears.

"*Oh, that's why,"* he thinks dully to himself, *"I've been crying*."

His whole body feels numb, like it's somebody else's and he's just along for the ride. He looks down at his hands; they're bigger than he remembers, longer, more sinewy.

He swipes his hands across his face and Hambone begins to bark and whine.

"Shh!" Will admonishes him and dismounts from his bike; he's not sure if he can ride right now." Let's go."

Will pushes his bike along, grateful for the numbness he's cocooned in. He knows what will happen once it fades; he's felt it in other people all his life. It's why people end up drunks and

addicts; they just want to stay cocooned, to dull the pain one more day, just one more day...until it's too late.

Every part of Will hurts. His feet know the way home so Will just follows them.

Down past the high school, middle school, and elementary schools. Past the church, graveyard, barbershops and nail salons. By the time he's paying attention to where his feet are leading him to he's outside "The Mind Palace."

He looks at the store with new eyes; like it's the first time he's ever seen it.

The sidewalk outside is crowded today. Under the stripped awnings, shoppers are pawing through stacks of books spread-out across both tables. He watches as a woman looks around before stuffing a handful of paperbacks into her shopping bag. Her eye catch Will's; she smiles, winks, and walks away.

Will just stands, watching her leave.

"Move your bike please!"

Will automatically moves and a throng of people press pass, jostling him as they go.

"Will? Will?"

Will follows the sound of the voice.

"Hi, Nash," he says smiling absentmindedly.

"Will?" Nash comes over and peers down at the boy who seems strange today. The man bends down to scratch Hambone then looks up. "Are you working today?"

Will frowns with confusion and shakes his head.

"I don't think so. Am I?"

Nash stands up and gingerly pulls Will's bike away from him; Will lets him. He watches, swaddled deep in his cocoon as the man takes the leash from his hand and pushes the bike towards the shop's entrance.

"Come inside," Nash urges, pulling open the door.

"Okay."

Will follows Nash into the buzzing shop. Lavinia is behind the counter ringing-up customers; she doesn't even notice Nash pushing Will's bike past the register.

They meet Hannibal coming out through the swinging gate.

"Nash?" Hannibal's eyes dart down to Will. "Will?"

Will's eyes swivel up to Hannibal. "Hi, Mr. Lecter."

"Hello, Will. Here... let me take that. Thank you Nash, you many go back outside now."

"Okay, but I think something's wrong with Will."

Hannibal looks back at the boy.

"He'll be alright. Tell Lavinia I'm upstairs with Will and I'll see her after I get him settled."

"Okay. Feel better!" Nash calls to Will as Hannibal takes the bike and Hambone out past the office to his courtyard; the boy following silently behind.

From his dog run, Richard barks an ecstatic greeting. Hannibal places Hambone in with him, adding more water and kibble to the bowls. Both dogs fall on the food as though they haven't eaten in days and Hannibal smiles, looking down at Will.

"He's fine here, let's go up upstairs."

He puts his arms around the boy and leads him into the house and up the backstairs and into his apartment.

Will has only been up here once before, and then, it was just a quick trip to the kitchen. He hesitates at the threshold, suddenly shy.

"Shoes off please," Hannibal demands, though he keeps his own on. He goes into the kitchen and opens the refrigerator, pulling out a jug of milk.

Will toes off his sneakers and pushes them against the side of the couch.

"Have a seat! Hannibal calls from the kitchen. He's busy at the stove, whisking something in a saucepan.

Will realizes he's exhausted. He looks over at the seating arrangement and chooses an armchair, walking over to perch on its edge. The boy examines the large, airy room; everything is new, and clean, and pristine, like a picture in a magazine.

Will is staring intently at a painting of two naked men when Hannibal finally appears from the kitchen, mug and plate in hand. He follows the boy's gaze and laughs self-consciously.

"It's a beautiful piece," he remarks, handing the mug to Will and placing the plate onto the coffee table. "Mexican hot chocolate and toasted Challah, " he announces.

Will sniffs the drink, before taking a tentative sip. He looks solemnly at Hannibal. "Thanks. It's good."

Hannibal sits down on the couch and nods.

"Is everything alright with your father?"

All at once Will realizes what this must look like; Hannibal is exuding quiet concern.

"Yes...he's alright, he's at dialysis."

"I know, I'm going to pick him up in an hour."

Hannibal would prefer that Will confides in him willingly, but he's not above interrogating the child to get to the bottom of what's troubling him. "What happened?"

Will drops his head and Hannibal rescues the cup before it spills.

"Here, let me take that...Now, what is it *basse*? I can see something has upset you."

Hannibal's voice, so full of love and concern triggers Will's tears; they begin to flow again, hot and copious, dripping onto his lap.

Instantly a swarm of dark and horrific scenarios rise up in Hannibal's mind; Will feels them and flinches.

"Nothing like that!" He sobs."Nothing bad like that!"

Hannibal's emotions turn tender and protective again.

"Then what's wrong, *barnlille*? Hmm?" Hannibal kneels at Will's feet and takes the boy's hands in his; they're ice cold. He rubs them between his warm palms for a moment before deciding on a course of action. He pulls the boy to his feet and wraps his arm around Will's shoulders.

"Come. You have a rest, and when you're feeling better, we'll talk." Hannibal begins leading the boy towards his guest room.

"What do you mean a rest? Like a nap?"

And even though Will is crashing after his adrenaline rush, can barely keep his eyes open, he doesn't like where this is heading; he's not a baby.

"Yes," Hannibal says, using his superior breadth and strength to manhandle the now resisting boy into the room. He maneuvers Will until he's seated on the bed and presses down on his shoulders to keep him there. Then Hannibal leans forward until their foreheads are nearly touching. Will can't pull back so he is forced to look directly into Hannibal's eyes.

"You will rest here until I go get your father," he orders and Will's face turns mutinous.

"You can't make me," he mutters under his breath but of course, being four inches away, Hannibal hears every word.

He lets go of the boy and stands to his full height.

"I can, and I will," he says smiling. "Now, lie down," he orders and goes to grab the chenille throw from the chaise at the foot of the bed.

Will reviews his rapidly diminishing options before defiantly standing and staring Hannibal square in the face.

Hannibal eyes narrow; then he recalls a child-rearing technique he's observed to good effect.

"**One**...," he counts, holding up a finger and returning Will's stare.

Will's eyebrows shoot up and his mouth drops open.

"**Two**..."Hannibal holds up another finger.

"**Th**..." And before he can finish the count, Will has flung himself back onto the bed with a scowl that could strip paint from a wall.

"*Remarkable!"* Hannibal thinks with happy relief as he drapes the blanket over the recumbent boy. "Good boy."

Will huffs and flops onto his side.

Unconcernedly, Hannibal readjusts the throw then sits down on the bed. All he can see of Will is a tangle of brown, messy curls and an ear and cheek, both pink from embarrassment.

And though Will is a teenager, and not a little child, Hannibal feels a powerful surge of paternal love.

"*What was it Nigel and I would take turns singing? After far was done and we couldn't sleep*?"

Will lies with with his eyes tightly shut; planning how best to trick Hannibal into leaving. But, in an unexpected move, the man sits down beside him and begins crooning a song in a sweet, soft tenor.

"*Dagen er fori... og vi må...sove og hvile...*"

Slowly and tentatively, as though he is remembering the words as he goes, Hannibal sings. Will feels fingers in his hair, petting in time to the tempo, the same way Frank used to gentle him when they would rock together on their swinging bench.

"*Dagen er forbi... så vi vil være...*"

The voice and the fingers work in tandem, and though the words are meaningless to Will, the love evidenced in the voice and fingers are undeniable .

In spite of his resolve, Will feels himself relaxing; his tight muscles unbunching as the song wends along until he is completely relaxed; the lullably and gentle touch easing his way.

"*...frisk igen i morgen...*"

Hannibal sings the refrain four times before pausing to check on the boy.

Will appears to be asleep.

Careful not to jostle the bed, Hannibal gets up to walk to the other side, the better to observe the slumberer.

"*Asleep*," he confirms, doubting that even Will could duplicate such an authentic breathing pattern. "*Good."*

Hannibal tucks an errant curl behind the boy's ear, " Sleep well, *elskede*," he whispers and leaves Will to his dreams.

As he exits the room, Hannibal is already pulling his phone from his jacket pocket. He dials a number as he passes through the living room and into his study, closing the door behind him.

"Alan? Hello! It's Hannibal Lecter...good, and yourself? Excellent! Just calling to confirm the tenth. Wonderful! What was that? You just received the FedEx? Oh...that's alright. Yes, we are all very excited; it's a wonderful, selfless thing my brother is doing... Ha, ha. Just as you say...Hmmm? Well, I've always been proud of him, but now... I suppose you could say he's my hero. Ha, ha. I agree! Yes...see you then. Goodbye."

Hannibal pockets his phone and leaves his apartment. He walks down the stairs until he is at the landing outside his panic room. He punches in the code and slips inside; the scent of urine and feces hits his nostrils and he sighs resignedly.

"I suppose it's your form of revenge," he addresses the figure strapped to a bed and hooked to multiple IVs, " but the fact is, when you piss and shit yourself, the only person you're hurting is you."

From around his gag, Nigel grins defiantly.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Nigel- gotta flush all the booze outta his system ;0)

Mexican hot chocolate: flavored with cinnamon and sold in tablets.

"Godnatsang" ("Goodnight Song") – This is a popular lullaby that was composed (lyrics and music) by Sigurd Barrett (born 1967), pianist, composer and host of a children's TV programme in Denmark, and fellow musician Steen Nikolaj Hansen. Sigurd usually sings this song at the end of his children's show. This lullaby has sleeping time as theme: The day is over and we must sleep and rest so we will be fresh again in the morning.

far- father
barnlille- kiddie, little one- (Word Hippo(
Elskede=Beloved-)BlueEyedNightwing)

The News

Chapter Summary

Hannibal tells his friends the good news.

Chapter Notes

just a quick little update...its been so long...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Thank you for takin' care of my boy."

Frank and Hannibal are returning from the dialyses clinic and Frank has been informed of Will's upset.

"Of course I hope he hasn't run-off in my absence. It's not my place, but..."

"You'd like to know what's bugging him?" Frank grins. "Well...eight times outta ten he just weathers these things alone; never lets his ol' dad help him."

Hannibal glances at Frank's handsome face and sees both hurt and resignation.

"Perhaps if we tackle the issue together?" He suggests.

"Good Cop, Bad Cop you mean?"

Hannibal laughs; Frank's remark has reminded him of a few bad cops who met with thoroughly warranted, though rather nasty, endings.

"I'll follow your lead."

Frank smiles and nods then falls silent; lost in his own thoughts.

"*Tonight,"* Hannibal decides, " *I'll tell them all tonight*."

"I'm glad to have you all here because I have a bit of news."

The shop is closed and Lavinia, Frank, and Will have been invited to stay for a light meal; soup, salad, and bread.

"What about Nash?" Will pipes up; he has been in a foul mood ever since waking and had made certain everyone knows it. "Shouldn't you wait for him?"

"I'll tell him Monday, " Hannibal promises with a look which brooks no arguement; Nash plays Bingo on Saturday nights, and nobody can convince him otherwise.

Will rolls his eyes and takes a bite of bread.

Lavinia covers her mouth to hide a smile; Will is such an adorable brat.

"Frank? Will?" Hannibal pauses dramatically. " A donor has been found."

Silence.

Will looks up from his plate; he fixes his eyes upon his father and holds his breath.

Frank slumps against his seatback staring mutely into his friend's face.

"Three weeks ago actually, but the paperwork just went through."

Even Lavinia is quiet; she sits, head bowed, crying silent tears of happy relief.

Will stirs uncomfortably, his own eyes filling.

"Well..."Frank exclaims his voice cracking as he wipes a tear from the corner of his eye. " That..."

"How come *you* know?!"

Will can't explain why, but this happy news is making him nervous; nervous and suspicious.

"Because I took the liberty of contacting an acquaintance; a transplant specialist. His practice relies on living donors; people who donate specifically for friends or family members. I submitted your case to him and three weeks ago his board reviewed and accepted it." Hannibal's expression becomes sheepish." I didn't mention it to you because I didn't want to stir-up false hopes. I plan to pay for everything, including your convalescence." He holds up a hand at the expression on Frank's face," I humbly apologize if I've overstepped; but I have to tell you...I'd do it again...and damn the consequences!"

Will's mouth drops open at the steely tone which has crept into Hannibal's voice; Lavinia takes his hand in hers.

Hannibal looks like he might cry.

Frank clears his throat.

He looks at his boy and sees in his pleading eyes all the past generations of Grahams staring back through him; long dead parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts.

"*For my son then*," he promises their shades and nods.

"Thank you my friend, I accept, " he croaks.

Lavinia gives a little cry and hides her face on Will's shoulder.

Hannibal stands with his wine glass; his face is fiercely beautiful.

"To Frank!"

Lavinia and Will jump to their feet and raise their glasses as Frank remains seated, his eye roving from person to person until it lands on his son; he smiles brightly and Will smiles back, blinking back tears.

"To Frank!!" They all toast in unison.

"You'll need to take better care of yourself," Hannibal reprimands his brother who's busily occupied with ordering a drink at the airline's VIP lounge.

"Fuck off Herr Frankenstein, " Nigel snaps he waits for his drink.

Hannibal's lips tighten but he has to agree that considering the circumstances, it's a just moniker.

Nigel's G&T arrives and he drinks thirstly.

"Ahhhh, that hits the spot," he says, his mood immediately mellowing. He looks playfully at his brother. "Maybe Dr. Mengele is more apropos?"

Hannibal smiles and sighs. There is something very compelling about his little brother; he wishes they could live on the same continent without the constant threat of killing one another.

"I'm nothing like him," Hannibal retorts without heat. " You were paid handsomely for your...donation."

"Yeah, but I'm fucked here and you know it!"

Hannibal laughs in his face.

"So... your unsavory operations don't have a toehold here; '*Bedre halvt bröd end Alt mist.'*"

Nigel snorts and finishes his drink. " *Skrid, pikhoved*! And by the way? Your accent is terrible!"

Both brothers are chuckling when Nigel's flight is finally called.

"That's me!"

Nigel winces as he swings his satchel over his shoulder.

"Be careful," Hannibal admonishes him, clapping him on the shoulder. "Have a good flight!"

Nigel becomes still and looks into his brother's face.

"Hanni... tell me you're not fucking that kid."

Hannibal is confused for a moment; then his face hardens.

"You really think...after all we went through...!?" He replies through gritted teeth.

Nigel nods. It's not that he feels protective about the boy, he just hates the idea his twin might be following in their father's footsteps.

"Well... good. *Farvel,storebror*."

"*Farvel, lillebror*."

They walk out of the lounge together; Hannibal's own flight leaves in an hour. He watches as his brother surrenders his boarding pass to the worker and walks onto the jet bridge. He stands at the window until Nigel's plane taxis away then he calls to check-in on the Grahams and the store; everything and everyone is doing well.

Hannibal smiles with contentment. Three weeks in London and Paris is a well deserved reward for the stresses he's dealt with during the past few months.

"*A little business to pay for the trip...*" he strategizes as he reenters the lounge and orders a drink, "*and the rest... playtime."*

"*Arbeit allein macht auch nicht glücklich*" he reminds himself as he accepts his drink and takes the first sip.

Perfect.

Chapter End Notes

> Josef Mengele (German: [ˈjoːzɛf ˈmɛŋələ] (listen); 16 March 1911 – 7 February 1979) was a German Schutzstaffel (SS) officer and physician in Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II.- Wikipedia
> "
> Bedre halvt bröd end Alt mist.
> English equivalent: Half a loaf is better than no bread

Arbeit allein macht auch nicht glücklich- German equivalent for "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy"
Pikhoved=Dickhead.
Skrid=fuck off.

Stave Two: "Fish Face"

Chapter Summary

Three years later...

Chapter Notes

This chapter is dedicated to the lovely Dreamlife77 who has been patiently waiting for Hannigram- the wait is over :0)

And also to cottonandvelvet who's comment, " If I may request one thing though, it's that the more 'explicit' side of the story come out a bit more, like it was in the first half- especially in terms of puberty and Will's developing sexuality. The plot is great don't get me wrong, but Will getting all flustered and horny over Hannibal and Anthony gives me life..."
prompted Me to speed- up the story. Thank You!

Here is where the UnderAge tag comes into play- additional tags will be added as needed. />

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Part Two
Three Years Later

"Happy Kidney Day to you, Happy Kidney Day to you, Happy Kidney Day, dear Fraaaaank...Happy Kidney Day to you!"

The assembled party cheers and claps.

Happy Kidney Day, lillebror! Hannibal silently toasts his twin; wherever he is.

Frank beams across the kidney shaped cake Hannibal created for this auspicious occasion and blows out the three, blood-red candles; everyone cheers again.

"Alrighty, who wants a piece?"

Will, Hannibal, Lavinia, Nash, and Thjis all raise their hands; Catherine abstains.

"What's the matter? You don't like cake?" Nash asks his girlfriend.

"I like cake but not that one. Can I have ice cream instead?"

"Of course," Lavinia replies, putting several scoops into a bowl for the younger woman," here you are...anyone else?"

"None for me," Thjis answers predictably," and just the tiniest sliver of cake please."

What a waste of good cake! Will gripes nastily to himself. *We all know you aren't going to eat it!*

Ever since meeting Hannibal's newest boyfriend four months ago; Will has felt nothing but antagonism towards the Dutchman.

It doesn't help that Thjis sports the lean, muscled body of a yoga instructor, or that he towers a full foot above Will's curly head, or that he can speak to Hannibal in four languages.

Which if you think about it is kinda rude! And so what if his eyes are sky-blue? Will thinks sourly as Frank cuts the cake, *they're set so far apart, he looks like a fish-a haddock! And his skin is too pink and freckly!*

Will much prefers a tanned look, like Hannibal's.

"Skin cancer in the making," Will had overheard Thjis warn Hannibal after learning he'd abstained from applying sunscreen.

***And** he's a boring know-it-all!*

Will can't fathom what Hannibal sees in him.

"I'll have ice cream!"

Will is treated to one of Thjis' most watery, supercilious smiles.

"Do you think you should, William? Aren't you in training?"

Even his accent is annoying, Hannibal's is way better!

Will is just about to retort when a plate of cake and ice cream is thrust at him.

He looks up to see the all-observant Lavinia handing him his dessert; she winks and he makes an exasperated face, mindful that Thjis is watching them.

"I'm on my school's cross country team, not the Olympics," he snarks, taking his plate and moving to get as far away from Hannibal's lover as he can; he knows exactly what Thjis is going to say next.

"Well...I was only a little bit older than you are now when I qualified for my country's speed skating team," he reminds the group.

Hannibal smiles and puts an arm around Thjis' supple waist.

"Tell them the story about the Finn and the condoms," he suggests roguishly; over in his corner, Will stiffens.

Thjis brightens and launches into the story.

Hannibal gives his lover's ass a quick squeeze then strolls over to the boy.

"How's the cake?"

"Good."

"How's school? I don't see much of you these days."

"Fine."

"Mr. Lecter?"

It's Catherine; Nash hovering at her elbow."We're bored so we're going to go now. Thank you for the ice cream."

"You're very welcome. Thank you for coming."

Lavinia and Frank, still trapped at the table, listen with lackluster interest at Thjis' tale; smiling politely at intervals.

How can anyone turn such a tale of saucy, derring do into a dull, self-congratulatory rant? Lavinia wonders.

"Bye Frank! Bye Lavinia! Bye Will! Bye Thjis!" The couple calls as they hustle out Hannibal's apartment and down the back way.

"That was very sudden," Thijs remarks, interrupting his narrative to shoot Hannibal a puzzled look.

Will rolls his eyes and Hannibal shrugs his shoulders, feigning surprise.

Frank and Lavinia eye one another; now is their opportunity to slink away, while Thijs' focus is elsewhere, but they're too late, the man's attention is already returning.

"I apologize for the interruption...now where was I?"

"I think you'd finished," Lavinia proffers hopefully and Frank chokes on a glob of frosting.

"Processed sugar," Thjis remarks sagely as Frank sputters. "It's why all you Americans are so fat and unhealthy; it's a known killer."

"I think you might be right," Frank wheezes. "This outta give me that little push I needed to quit."

Lavinia guffaws and adds a dollop of ice cream to her slice.

Thjis looks at her aghast, before tearing his attention back to his potential convert.

"Well... Frank, if you are interested, I could give you..."

"Weren't you telling us about that Olympic commissioner?" Lavinia interrupts; if she has to hear about Thjis' love affair with ancient grains one more time, she's afraid she might commit manslaughter.

"Ah...that's right... "

Frank glares at Lavinia who graces him with a Cheshire cat smile.

"So... there we all were...just waiting for the commissioner to make his appearance..."

Lavinia sighs and droops over her cake, not even attempting to feign interest any longer; Frank helps himself to another sugar-loaded slice.

Thjis frowns but continues his monologue.

Hannibal shakes his head and turns from the in-house entertainment to focus on the boy before him; Will is joylessly plowing through his dessert.

He's missed spending time with Will since the teenager decided to cut back on his work hours; it feels like he never sees him anymore.

The past three years have wrought changes in the child. He is still slight of build, and will never reach six feet, but his shoulders are broader now, and his face has lost the round softness of boyhood. Hannibal can just pick-out the shadowy lines of whiskers along Will's lip and jaw line.

Very little remains of the little boy with the sticky hands he'd meet nearly four years ago, other than his beautiful grey-blue eyes and sweeping dark lashes; they look up at him now with a guarded expression.

"So...how's running? I'd like to go to one of your meets."

"The seasons ends next week," Will says, avoiding his boss's eyes; the past few months, he hasn't felt comfortable standing this close to him.

He casually takes a step backwards.

"That's too bad," Hannibal says, wondering why Will is moving away, "what will you do next?"

"Train for Track," Will says around a spoonful of ice cream. Hannibal takes a step forward; Will can smell the clean starchiness of his shirt mixing with the scent of his cologne.

Mr. Lecter smells good; too good.

The boy shuffles from foot to foot trying not to think about Mr. Lecter and Thijs in bed together...kissing...touching...fucking.

Shit.

Will leans around Hannibal.

"Dad?!" He calls over," I gotta go! I have tons of homework...but you should stay!" He adds quickly when Frank drops his fork and begins to push back his chair. "It's your party!"

He really hopes his dad will stay; he needs some alone time.

Hannibal watches Will contemplatively; he's been mindful of Will's sullen rudeness for months now.

Perhaps he is having 'boy troubles'? Hannibal postulates and decides to show the teen mercy.

He turns to address his guest of honor.

"Frank? Please, stay a bit longer and have some tea! And I was hoping to show you those papers you were interested in. The ones published by the naturalist who studied under Charles Darwin?"

"Oh!" Frank says, clearly torn.

Thjis saunters over to Hannibal, drapes an arm around his waist and smiles down at Will from his lofty height.

To Will, the two men looked fused together and he wonders what it would feel like to have Hannibal hold him like that; he realizes with a start that Thjis has been speaking to him.

Fuck! What's old fish-face saying now!?

Will forces his attention back to the man.

"I asked...what it is you're studying, William?"

Will hates when Thjis calls him William.

"It's 'Will'... and I'm writing a paper about the death penalty...Should I put this in the sink?" He asks Hannibal, indicating his plate; but Thjis refuses to be put off so easily.

"Oh! The American death penalty! How barbaric! Did you know the Netherlands abolished it back in 1878?"

Will shrugs; carefully avoiding the man's googlie eyes, he turns and walks towards the kitchen.

"*So eine Flegel*!"

Thjis looks put out, so Hannibal nestles his face into his lover's neck, kissing it gently; he finds Thjis pedanticism rather charming.

" *Es tut mir wirklich leid. Ignorier ihn einfach*," he murmers, rubbing his hand over Thjis' cock.

"Humph!" Thjis answers, but a smile brightens his face and he pulls Hannibal into his arms.

At this moment, Will returns from the kitchen, notices them embracing, and hurries past.

Both men's heads swivel to watch as he passes, but the boy deliberately keeps his eyes averted.

"See?!" Thjis hisses into Hannibal's ear."His father needs to do something about his son's behavior if he doesn't want him to turn-out to be a complete delinquent!"

Hannibal laughs and kisses his lover's cheek; the thought of Will as a delinquent is amusing but not wholly unpleasant.

"Bye!" Will calls from the door, not waiting for anyone to respond before slamming it shut.

"Kleiner Bengel,″ Thjis mutters and Hannibal has to admit, the man has a point.

He smiles at Frank and Lavinia.

"Let me put the kettle on, and then I'll sort out those papers, " Hannibal promises and hurries off to the kitchen.

Thjis smiles after him then rubs his hands together.

"So! What shall we talk about now?" He asks the remaining pair.

Lavinia jumps up.

"I just remembered! I've forgotten I need to ask Hannibal a question about an important order. I'll just go do it now before I forget again. Will you gentlemen please excuse me?"

"Of course! Business before pleasure!" Thjis settles onto Lavina's vacated chair.

"Now, Frank! While we are waiting for our tea, let me tell you a little more about the benefits of rawfoods; I never got the chance before."

"Great!" Frank agrees gloomily.

As Thjis launches into his spiel,Frank reflects on Will's recent poor behavior.

I should ask Hannibal if he's confided anything to him. I can't understand it; he's doing well in school, he seems to enjoy running, and he's not dating anyone that I know of; I wonder what's eatin' him?

Lavinia pokes her head around the kitchen's entranceway, listens for a moment to the topic of conversation, grimaces, then disappears again as quickly as she'd appeared.

"So...how does that sound to you?"

Thjis has apparently reached a stopping point.

"Interestin'! Very interestin'!" Frank says hoping he's not just unwittingly agreed to a five day meditation retreat or colonic irrigation.

"Tea!"

Hannibal is back with the teapot; Lavinia following behind him with a loaded tray.

"Grand! What was the name of that naturalistic again? I seem to have forgotten."

Frank is frantic for a change in the conversation.

"Yes! Let me go and find those!"

Hannibal retreats to his office and returns with a thick portfolio.

"All the illustrations are hand-tipped," he notes and passes them to Frank.

"Wonderful! Would you mind very much if I took these to the couch? The light's better there."

Lavinia shoots Frank a suspicious look.

"Of course not. I'll bring your tea to you there after it's finished seeping."

Hannibal places the teapot down and sits next to Thjis, capturing a hand in his and pulling it onto his lap.

Frank smiles his thanks and practically skips to the sofa.

Sneaky...rotten... bastard! Lavinia thinks.

"Miss Lavinia?"

Thjis is feeling a heavy responsibilty to model proper social etiquette for these rather ill-mannered Americans.

"I am very much interested in hearing what sort of exercise regime a woman your age finds helpful?"

"'A woman my age' ?"

"Yes. What are you? Seventy? Eighty?"

Safe on the couch, Frank peers over the edge of the manuscript with dancing eyes.

"Well Thjis, here in America, a woman my age really only has one option..." Lavinia pauses, tilts her head towards Frank and winks.

Thjis looks intrigued.

"Just the one?! Is that due to the poor quality of your health care system? What is it? Yoga? Pilates? Walking?"

"Sex clubs!" Lavinia elucidates him. "And plenty of them! Now... shall I pour?"

As soon as Will returns home, he takes Hambone out for a night run.

As he sprints along his favorite route, he tries and fails to keep his mind off Hannibal.

Compared to how he feels now, the crush he'd had when he was thirteen seems decorous and chaste.

Three years, two boyfriends, and hundreds of hours of logged internet porn later; Will is ready to pop his cherry and he has only one person in mind.

This is fucking horrible, he frets. *How am I going to do this? He still thinks of me as a little kid!*

Will has done his research, the age of consent in their state is seventeen.

*Only four more months to convince him to dump fish-face and choose me!"*Will's stomach flutters with excitement.

What about dad?! A little voice in Will's head protests.

"What he doesn't know won't hurt him," Will pants aloud under his breath as he reaches his two mile mark; time to head back.

He's passing a boulangerie when a brilliant idea blazes across his brain like a flaming comet.

"Fuck!"

So distracted by his revelation, he's nearly smacked into a pole.

"Come on Hambone!" Will tugs the leash a little; his whole body feels tingly and not just from his runner's rush. "Let's go home!

And celebrate in the shower, he adds to himself; he has just the mental image he plans to use; Hannibal, naked except for a beret and a salacious smile.

"Fuck yeah," he moans, picking up speed; now he really needs to make it home before Frank does.

Chapter End Notes

Well...what do you think?
Does this squick anyone out?
I'd love to have some feedback at this point.
Thanks :0)

"So eine Flegel!"- little brat!

" Es tut mir wirklich leid. Ignorier ihn einfach," -I'm sorry, just ignore him.

"Kleiner Bengel," - what a rude person! (boor)
Thjis is purposely referencing a title of an old movie here- Hannibal, being Hannibal gets the reference ;-)

Corrected German provided by the lovely mondkalb- thank you so much !!!!!!

"Face like a haddock" is borrowed from a line in an episode of "Jeeves and Wooster"- the one where Bertie goes on tour with a musical.

Will's sexy Danish trout

Chapter Summary

Will makes his move.

Chapter Notes

Hello!
This chapter is dedicated to two readers: mondkalb and dong.
Mondkalb for their continued support of this story and editorial help with translations- thank you!
And dong, who wrote me a very funny, sweet comment which gave me the little kick I needed to continue with this story.

And finally, thank you to everyone who has read this story! I appreciate you :0)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Mr. Lecter?"

"Yes?"

"Has my dad talked to you about next weekend yet?"

Hannibal frowns." No...I don't believe he has. What happens next weekend?"

Will forces himself to relax; this could work.

"It's when the group home practices lock-down drills. For fires, and shooters...stuff like that. Don't worry!" Will brushes aside Hannibal's suddenly protective concern. "Nothing like that has ever happened. But it means dad isn't going to be home ..." Will stops short. Suddenly his brilliant, sneaky plan strikes him as terribly juvenile and transparent. "No...nevermind."

Luckily for Will, however, Hannibal is unaware of any ulterior motives. "No...go on, your father is not going to be home? Maybe you would like to stay for dinner on Fri-"

"Could I stay the whole weekend?"

Will's blurted request is accompanied by a rising blush. Hannibal, caught off guard, is nonetheless charmed by Will's little-boy reaction. "Oh! Well...let me think."

"That's okay if you're too busy... " *No?! What?! Don't tell him that! Fuck!*

"No...no, just let me think what I have on the docket for this weekend."

Hannibal smiles reassuringly but the boy's nervousness and bright color attracts his further scrutiny.

"Is everything alright?"

"Yes!" Will's yelp is fueled by nerves but it comes-out like snark. "I mean...yes. It's just that I have a fuc-...lots of homework and papers and sh-...I mean stuff that I have to get done, " Hannibal smiles approvingly at Will's effort to tidy-up his language. "And our heat isn't really working right now... so I just thought...I could hang-out here. You don't need be here 24/7...I don't need a babysitter."

Will instantly regrets his soft sell; he hopes Hannibal doesn't really leave him alone in his apartment, that would kind of defeat the purpose.

But it's too late now; Will has cast his line, and now must wait to see if his sexy, Danish trout will swallow the bait.

"I would enjoy having you stay Will..." Hannibal says absentmindedly. He's remembered that next Saturday is when Thjis plans to take them to his favorite BDSM club. For a man with such priggish manners, Thjis is home to a legion of kinky predilections; not that Hannibal is complaining. "How many nights? Thjis and I have plans for next Saturday, but perhaps..."

"Thjis is going to be here!?"

Hannibal becomes stern.

SHIT

"Yes...he'll be spending Saturday night and all of Sunday here; is that a problem?

"Noooo..." Will attempts to backpedal. "It's just that I need a lot of help with French and I was hoping you could help me."

Fuck!

As soon as his lame explanation leaves his lips, Will sees his error. Maybe the nuns are right; habitual masturbation *does* make you stupid.

Hannibal's face clears.

"Well then you're in luck! Thjis is a gifted linguist! We can both assist you with your assignments. And a good thing too...I'd like for the two of you to become better acquainted."

Fuck squared!

"Why?!" Will's snotty tone lowers Hannibal's brow again.

"Why what?"

"Why do I have to get to know him better?"

Hannibal tilts his head slightly; Will knows he's just this side of pissed-off, but he can't seem to censure himself.

"Why are you jealous of Thjis, Will?"

"I'm not! I just don't like him!"

Hannibal shakes his head. "But why? He likes you."

"No he doesn't! He just pretends to like me!"

Hannibal runs his hand over his hair; he should have known better than to lie."Will...I'm sorry you don't like Thjis, but you are getting too old for such childish prejudices."

Will can't recall a time he's been so simultaneously flattered and angered. "I'm old enough to know a douche when I meet one!"
Hannibal's eyes narrow to mere slits.

SHIT!

Hannibal pauses a moment before continuing. "Will... I care for you very much," the boy's eyes widen involuntarily and a tingle runs through his groin," but Thjis is my boyfriend and therefore my priority."

Will snorts and Hannibal forces himself to breathe through his nose. When he does speak again, his voice is low and precise. "Now... if you would like to have dinner here... on Friday and Saturday and stay both nights, we would be very happy to host you."

Will lowers his eyes and looks away. He's ashamed he lost his cool like a spoiled brat but his body is a bundle of raw nerves; this exchange is crazily titillating. Then there's the matter of Hannibal's internal conflict as well. The empathic boy feels the man's turbulent, vying emotions. It's as though Hannibal's wires are crossed, and he doesn't know how to feel or react.

Will's stomach gives a squirmy jump. Maybe... just maybe this isn't a complete failure after all. He raises his head slowly, allowing for the full effect of his luminous blue eyes and long, curled lashes. "Okay...thanks Mr. Lecter. That would be great! And you're right...Thjis and I should get to know each other better...sorry."

"Oh! That's alright, krølle; I forgive you."

Hannibal's relief, coupled with the old endearment is too adorable. Will beams up into the man's face, greedily noting how his ash-blond hair falls over his forehead and that in the dim lights of the closed shop, his eyes are chocolate, rather than sherry- brown

Hannibal smiles cautiously. "Is there anything else?"

Will shakes his head; the better to showcase his mop of curls. " No, that was it."

The boy pulls on his backpack looks down to adjust it, then raises his eyes again as he glances over his shoulder. " Bye! And thanks!"

"Goodbye! See you next week!"

"Okay."

Hannibal locks-up, sets the alarm, and turns off the lights. He stands for a moment, just thinking, in the dark store.

If Will had been anyone else, man or woman, Hannibal would have sworn he was being flirted with.

But Will? Little Will?

Tsst...Don't be an Åndsbolle!

Hannibal laughs and shakes his head as he climbs his back stairs.

What would a beautiful, young boy want with an old man like me? I'm old enough to be his father!

He unlocks his apartment, and feels a jolt of erotic pleasure about next Saturday. *I can't wait that long*, he admits as his cock hardens, *I need to see Thjis tonight*. He sends his lover a quick text and pours himself a glass of wine while he waits for his response.

Biking to his apartment, Will's mind races with all the sorts of things a boy his age would like to do with a man old enough to be his own father: frottage, rimming, blowjobs, nipple play...what was that thing? Sounding? And the big one of course...*I wonder if he's a vers?*

Will groans as his hard penis presses against the unforgiving bike seat.

Now all I have to do is get rid of Thjis! He thinks,smiling all the home.

"Good evening Will! I wasn't expecting you yet! Don't you have Mass?"

"Seniors aren't required to go."

"Ah... sink or swim by this age?"

"Something like that." Will grins happily. "Should I go put my stuff upstairs?"

"Yes, let me give you a key."

Will sprints upstairs like a horny mountain goat and let himself into the apartment. He stands in the foyer for a moment, just basking in the fact he's here, deep in Hannibal's habitat.

He takes his time walking through the living room; running his hands over the backs of chairs and sofa like a prospective buyer. He stops opposite the painting of two nude men and stares at it, remembering the day Tony broke-up with him and how he'd ended-up here.

Man, what a missed opportunity! Maybe I can fake another break down...no wait! I can get caught out in the snow so he'll need to help me into a hot bath!

Will walks to the room he'll be staying in and drops his backpack and duffle on the bed.

Or...what is that thing? Where you have to get naked under the covers if you get hypothermia?

This train of leads to the inevitable, and the boy is forced to adjust himself in his too tight underwear as he heads back out the door.

I wish I could go commando...maybe I have time for a quick wank?

Will's thoughts are interrupted when he notices he's standing directly outside Hannibal's bedroom. Impulsively, the boy puts his hand on the lever and pushes down; it clicks and the door swings open. Then he remembers, too late, that Hannibal probably has security cameras all over the place. He mimes surprise, turns, and bolts into the bathroom.

Whew! That was close!

He's wondering if he should start stroking himself when Hannibal's voice blares over the intercom.

"Hello?! Will!? Are you coming back down?"

Will yanks-up his pants, splashes water on his face, dries it to leave an evidence trail, and sprints out the bathroom and over to the speaker.

"Yeah! Just going to the bathroom and unpacking. Be right down. "

Will can't remember the last time he had so much fun at work.

He throws himself into every task Hannibal gives him with a missionary's zeal: ringing-up, assisting customers, sorting stock, joking around with Nash and Hannibal, and insistently peppering the latter with questions about his life.

Hannibal finds Will to be quite different from the mopey teen he's used too. And though Hannibal finds him entertaining, it does require some getting used to.

"So...how old were you when ...you know...?"

Hannibal well remembers how old he was when he lost his virginity, but nothing could entice him to share this childhood trauma with Will. He fixes his mind on an image of Thjis trussed, shaved, and locked in a cock cage and shakes his head.

"Whoa...so it was good I'm thinking," Will teases, feeling Hannibal's arousal but not understanding the context.

Hannibal smirks and thrusts a paper at him. "Could you please text Lavinia about this order?"

The man doesn't understand where Will's font of giddy, good humor is bubbling-up from, but he suspects it has something to do with a new boyfriend. Maybe his young guest will confide in him over dinner?
Will takes the invoice, smiles a hundred watt smile, winks, and pulls his phone out of his pocket.

Hannibal blinks and clears his throat.

Forelsket; definitely forelsket; ' Love makes fools of us all.'

Smiling sympathetically, Hannibal returns to his work. Will walks away, pretending to text but actually taking a candid shot of Hannibal instead.

He checks the image: tanned, chiseled cheekbones, forelock falling across his brow, small, introspective smile dancing on his lips. The boy's insides turn ooey, gooey, like Toll House cookies, still warm from the oven.

Yum! This is a keeper! Okay...Lavinia.

Will texts the woman, making certain not to mention any dinner plans; the last thing he wants is Lavinia crashing their party.

"Will?"

It's Hannibal holding his cell phone to his ear. Will can just see the bottom of the photo and its label; Thjis.

Bleck! "Yes, Mr. Lecter?"

"I have to take this call in my office. Could you man the register? Nash is upstairs." Hannibal is already pushing his way through the swinging gate and towards his office.
"Sure!" Will calls after him, watching Hannibal's broad back until it disappears.

Hmmmmm. Wonder what that's all about.

Will waits on pins and needles until Hannibal reappears fifteen minutes later; it's clear something's wrong.

Okay... so unless someone used Thjis' phone, it's not cuz he's been found dead.

"Everything alright?"

"Yes!" Hannibal barks. "Get back to work!"

Geez! Touchy!

Will slinks away but manages to spy on Hannibal for the rest of the night. Ever since his call, the man has been radiating worry, frustration, and...relief? Will isn't certain, but that's what it feels like. He offers to bring-in the outside table stock so Nash has more time with Richard and soon discovers charity carries its own reward; multiple trips in and out of the shop serve as an excellent cover to watch Hannibal without drawing attention to himself.

Man he's pissed off! I wonder if he'll tell me what's wrong...pfft...probably not.

Finally the last customer leaves, the doors are locked, and the downstairs alarm set. Wordlessly, Hannibal takes the till through to the office and shuts the door behind him.

What a grouch!

Will flops onto an easy chair; the same one Nigel blew smoke rings from all those years ago.

Whatever happened to that asshole? Mr. Lecter...no... Hannibal...never talks about him. I need to ask Mr. Lecter if I can call him by his first name.Kinda like tutoyer-ing him; maybe he'll go for it if I ask him in French?!

*"*Feet off the furniture please!"

Will starts and slams his feet onto the floor.

"Thank you. Hungry?"

"Starving!"

"Good!" Hannibal smiles for the first time in hours. "Let's go and cook."

Will grins and jumps to his feet, closely following behind Hannibal as they climb the stairs. *"Fuck! I need some fries to go with that shake!"*

Hannibal holds the door open for the boy. "You'll be my sous chef tonight."

Will giggles nervously as he can't help but form a mental image of a literal translation.

"Something amusing?"

Hannibal isn't helping matters by bending down in front of the open frig, rummaging through drawers and shelves for ingredients.

Will's mouth drops open; he hopes he's not drooling.

"Nope! Just remembered something funny that happened in French class."

Hannibal straightens. "Oui! Le français! Pratiquons!"

Will wrinkles his nose and sighs as Hannibal begins narrating his actions in rapid-fire French. "Will? Faites attention! Maintenant! Répétez après moi!"

Will continues to wilt as Hannibal teaches, then drills him on basic cooking terms, culinary tools, and a smattering of French history.

Will really needs to stop this français-train if he wants to accomplish anything tonight. "Who was on the phone?"

Hannibal's wooden spatula stops stirring the reducing sauce.

"Thjis. He's had some bad news."

"Really? Is he okay." Will might be jealous and sexually frustrated, but he's not a prick.

"It's his father actually...he's very sick."

'Dying ' is the unspoken word that dangles at the end of Hannibal's sentence.

"Oh."

Hannibal glances down at the boy, sensing what is going through his mind; he debates whether he should hug him. Ignoring the man's hesitation, Will shuffles up and rests his forehead on Hannibal's shoulder. The man encircles the boy with his free arm and gives him an encouraging squeeze.

"Don't fret hvalp. Your father is doing well!"

Will nods and snuggles his face against Hannibal's chest, listening to the boom, swish, boom, of the man's heart. Too soon, Hannibal takes his arm away. "Come. This is nearly ready. Is the table laid?"

"Yes."

Stupid table; it gets laid by you all the time.

"Good. Could you pour the wine? The bottle's there in that marble chiller. Your father has given me permission to serve you one glass with dinner." Hannibal hopes the promised treat will raise the boy's diminished spirits.

"Okay."

Hannibal plates the food, sets it on the table and they sit down."Smells great!" *Almost as good as you!*

"Thank you. Or should I say merci beaucoup? Bon Appétit!"

They eat in silence for a few minutes.

"I've never had duck before, I mean canard."

"Really? Duck is a very popular dish in France."

"So...what is Thjis going to do? About his dad?"

Hannibal's air of bonhomie vanishes.

"He's going back to Holland."

Will stops mid-bite; Hannibal avoids his eye.

"When?"

Hannibal studies his glass, swirls, sniffs, and sips.

Welcome class to Stalling 101.I'll be your professor; Dr. Lecter!

"Tonight," Hannibal finally admits." He's taking a red-eye out of Newark."

Will stuffs his loaded fork in his mouth and chews rapidly before finding the courage to go on. "He wanted you to come with him...why didn't you?"

Hannibal drops his cutlery and sits back. He fixes the boy with a cold, calculating look.

"That, young man... Is none of your business!"

Glaring, Hannibal scoops up his fork and knife and begins sawing away at the tender duck. He slices a section of poached fig, pairs it with a portion of duck and inelegantly crams the whole thing into his mouth.

Whoa! " Okaaay...but if you ever want to talk about it..."

Hannibal shoots him a furious look and perfunctorily shakes his head."Thank you Will, but I don't think that is appropriate, under the circumstances."

"What 'circumstances'?" Will parrots sharply; unconsciously mimicking Hannibal's accent.

Hannibal places his fork and knife along the rim of his plate again and rests his hands on the table. "You are a child. I am an adult. Adults do not share intimate details of their relationships with children."

"Who's talking 'intimate details'!" Will's imitation of Hannibal's accent is purposeful this time. " I'm just asking as a friend cuz you seemed so butthurt about it! Geez! Sorry for caring!"

Will's outburst is so guileless and full of childish hurt Hannibal instantly relaxes; maybe his suspicions about Will's behavior are foundless after all. The man raises his palms in supplication and bows his head. "My apologies, Will. Thank you for your concern; I know it is heartfelt."

Damn! Will has a hard time staying angry when confronted with those eyes and that mouth.

"Its fine," he mutters and vindictively stabs his duck breast.

"So...my plans for have changed. Is there anything you would like to do that night? Go to a late movie perhaps? The museums will be closed by that time."

Museums? Movies? Will's surprised Hannibal hasn't offered to take him to the zoo... or out for an ice cream cone. "Nah. I'll probably go for a run and then just hang-out here, if that's okay with you?"

"A run? At night in the snow?"

"Uh huh. It's part of our training." Will glibly lies. "Coach says the cold is integral cuz it slows the body's production of lactic acid so our winter runs are more productive."

"Hmm? I've never heard that. Alright, a quiet night it is. But why don't you run tomorrow morning while it's light outside? I could get up and run with you; though I doubt I could keep up."

"Ha, ha, right!" Will scrambles to find a way to shutdown Hannibal's suggestion." That might not work cuz I have to go hard for three miles then taper back over five more."

"So many? Well, I doubt very much whether I could keep-up then. You should be fine, so long as you take your phone with you."

Will smiles at Hannibal's over protectiveness. "What about the alarms?"

"Just wake me up and I'll deactivate them. Then ring the bell when you need to get back in."

"Oh, okay." Will's mood rises like a hot air balloon. "Great!"

"Good. Now, would you like seconds?"

"Yes, please." Will hands him his plate and Hannibal goes to fill it.

"Do you remember that time you wanted me to teach you soccer?" The man teases as he drizzles fruit sauce over a portion of duck.

"Can't say that I do! "Will breezily lies then laughs when Hannibal turns toward him in surprise.

"Hmph. I paid $12.95 plus tax for that ball," Hannibal grumps good naturedly before handing Will his filled plate and sitting back down.

"Mr. Lecter?"

"Yes? "

"Would it be alright...if I started calling you 'Hannibal'?"

Hannibal mouth is full of wine; he forces himself to swallow quickly."Yes... I don't have a problem with that. But may I ask why now?"

"Because I'm older; I'm going off to college next year. It just feels..."

"Like it's time?"

Will's smile could outshine the sun.

"Yeah! Kinda like we're friends."

Hannibal nods and raises his glass.

"Well then...to friends!"

"To friends," Will repeats as they click their glasses together.

"Dibs not pots and pans!"

Hannibal doesn't even dignify Will's demand with a response. He merely goes to the sink, picks-up a sponge and places it into the boy's hand.

"Zut, merde, putain!"

With a straight face, Hannibal grabs a towel and begins to wind-it into a tight twist. Will yips and runs out of the room mere milliseconds before the snapping towel would have whipped his bottom.

"Fine! I won't swear!" Will yells from the safety of the hallway. "But you're the one who wanted me to practice French!"

Hannibal flings the towel over his shoulder then laughs as two bright eyes cautiously peer around the corner."Is it safe?"

"Only for boys who are ready to do their chores!"

"Pffft. Whatever." Will strolls back in, wishing it could always be like this with Hannibal; he knows they would be good together. "But I get to pick the movie tonight!"

"Deal!" Hannibal smiles; shocked to realize that he hasn't even thought of Thjis for the past hour. "With one condition; it must be French!"

Will's tortured groan makes Hannibal laugh again. "You wash, I'll load the dishwasher."

"Fine," Will grouses. He rolls up his sleeves and attacks the sinkful of dirty pans, lost in his own schemes, completely unaware how often Hannibal looks his way, watching him as he works.

Chapter End Notes

As always, if you are fluent in a language I am butchering, please leave a correction in the comments- thank you!

Love makes fools of us all.'
-Thackeray
Forelsket;
-euphoria of first love
Åndsbolle
-dimwit
krølle
curly
vers-slang for a person who will top or bottom
wank- used because in my head canon, Will reads Johnlock fan fic ;)

The towels

Chapter Summary

Will begins his campaign to seduce Hannibal.

Chapter Notes

hello everyone!
I've been struggling to find time to write and it is only going to get worse as RL becomes busier for me- but I wanted to give readers a little update.

Hope you enjoy :0)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hannibal?"

Will is standing outside his host's upstairs office. Hearing his Christian name spoken by the boy is odd, but also strangely liberating.

"Yes?"

"I wanted to take a shower, but I don't have..."

Will pauses and flushes pink.

"You need to borrow some of my toiletries?" Hannibal assumes, already rising; he remembers all too well the embarrassment of having to ask adults for things he'd needed as a boy.

"Yeah!" Will says beaming with relief.

"I apologize...I thought your bathroom was fully stocked...let me..."

"It...it is..." Will confesses, looking abashed.

Hannibal sits back down.

"Oh...what is it you need then bølle?" Hannibal teases.

Will grins, he's never thought to ask what all the little terms of endearment Hannibal uses mean, but he likes that the man never uses them with anyone else; that it's their own private thing.

"I just was wondering if I could use your stuff...you always smell so good..."

In spite of all his machinations, Will's face flames red at how this sounds. *Shit! Get it together Graham!*

Hannibal blinks once then tries to play-off his shock.

"Oh! Right! Well that is...why don't you just help yourself then. Just be certain to return everything after you're through."

"When are you taking your shower?"

"I'll wait until after you're done," Hannibal says, wondering if Will's concerned there will not be enough hot water. "But no matter, there will be plenty of hot water for the both of us."

"Okay...what're you working on?" Will asks, stepping into the room, he's never been into before.

Hannibal quickly closes his laptop's window and pushes down the top.

"Some financials...nothing of import," the man lies.

"That sounds interesting," Will fibs, "I'm taking personal finance in school. What kind of software do you use?"

"Anthology and Quicken among others."

"Can you show me?"

"Will? Is something bothering you?"

"No...I'm just interested."

Hannibal's bullshit meter goes off and it reflects in his face.

Will laughs.

"Geez...so suspicious!"

"What is this about Will? I have work to do."

Will's face drops and Hannibal feels unaccountably guilty.

"Are you bored? Would you like to watch that movie we discussed?"

Will's sunny grin reappears and Hannibal smiles in return. "I'll finish-up here while you take your shower then we'll look for a movie...sound good?"

"Yeah! Thanks Hannibal!"

Will sprints out of the room and Hannibal shakes his head, but he's grinning from ear to ear.

Fifteen minutes later and Hannibal is locking his office when he hears the shower still running.

Still? What is he doing in there...oh...that...best not to disturb him then.

Smiling, Hannibal reminisces about Nigel's propensity for jacking-off at all times and places.

That horrid sock he used, Hannibal shudders as he enters the pad key's code, *it was so stiff it could stand-up on its own.*

As though the boy senses his thoughts, the water shuts off.

Humph...finally.

"Hannibal!?"

Hannibal looks up from the art catalogue he's flipping through.

"Yes?"

"Could you bring me a towel?"

Hannibal frowns.

"There should be some right on the towel rack," he calls.

"I can't find them!"

Hannibal sighs and walks toward the guest room with the catalogue still in hand. He finds the door is open but stops before entering the room.

"Have you found it yet?"

"No! Could you bring me one please?"

"That can't be right...I know I put some in..." Hannibal mutters as he walks toward the bathroom; he stops when he rounds the corner.

Will is out of the shower and standing buck naked in profile with his face turned away; it appears he doesn't know Hannibal is there.

In a blink of an eye, Hannibal has seen everything: firm, round ass, long, slender, defined, legs, soft bush of pubic hair and a surprisingly thick circumcised penis. He feels he has

committed a faux pas and stumbles backwards around the corner. "Will? I'm at the door...did you find them?"

"No! What should I do? Use the bath mat?"

"No...hold on a moment...I'll get you some from the linen closet."

Hannibal retrieves a thick stack of towels, and reminding himself that Will is an athlete and therefore accustomed to the company of men in a locker room, returns to the guest bathroom.

Will is at the mirror, shaving. He hears Hannibal enter and twists toward him, smiling.

"Thanks! What movie do you want to watch?"

Hannibal forces himself to keep his eyes on the boy's reflection in the mirror; he doesn't want to appear lecherous. He holds-out a bath towel; the boy indicates his foamy hands.

"Thanks...can't take it right now..."

Hannibal goes to loop the towel through the towel rack and places the remainder on a shelf. He attempts to keep his voice nonchalant. "Thjis and I were planning on watching an old black and white...but if you have something else in mind, that is alright as well."

Will bends over to splash his face with water and Hannibal catches himself mesmerized by the movement of the boy's back muscles; he turns to leave, disappointed in himself. *What a dirty old man I am*.

"Black and white is fine...thanks for the towels."

Hannibal leaves the bathroom as Will is just wrapping a thick towel around his waist. He is passing the closet when something white catches his eye. He pushes open the cracked door and peers down.

The pile of missing towels.

As soon as Hannibal leaves the guestroom, Will exits the bathroom feeling pleased with himself.

Well... now at least he knows what he's missing.

He grabs a thin, clingy t-shirt and a pair of sweatpants out of his duffel and dresses, then pads barefoot out into the corridor. Even before he reaches Hannibal's door, he can hear the shower is on; he huffs with irritation.

How am I supposed to figure-out what he thought if he's gone...wait a minute...maybe he's in there whacking-off ***because*** *of what he saw...*

This thrilling thought goes straight to his dick which begins to swell, pushing the fabric of the sweat pants up and out. He puts his hand on Hannibal's door handle but doesn't open it; it's enough just to be near the sound of water and know that fifteen feet away, Hannibal is standing, nude, in the hot, steamy shower.

Uh oh.

Will walk trots back to his room and into his own bathroom. He pulls down his sweats and gingerly wraps his fingers around his tingling erection.

"*On your back, arms above your head."*

Will moans at the image of Hannibal ordering him down; a large, body drapes over him, caging him in.

"*What...what are you going to do to me?"* His fantasy-self quavers.

Will's dick is slick with precum; he's already close.

Imaginary Hannibal smiles wickedly before taking Will's throbbing cock down his throat.

Will's come spurts all across the floor and his legs go wibbly wobbly.

"Fuck!"

He strokes himself through the aftershocks surprised at how powerful and smooth his second orgasm of the night was. Will wipes himself then uses the same washcloth to clean the floor; the humid air is thick with the smell of sex and Hannibal.

Will wouldn't have it any other way.

By the time Hannibal has finished showering and dressing in his night clothes, Will has made some microwave popcorn and a nest of fleecy blankets on the living room couch.

"You look very cozy," Hannibal remarks, thinking how young the boy looks all bundled-up. His grin goes crooked when he recalls Will's deception. "What is that there?" He asks sniffing the air dubiously; it smells like rancid fat and stomach bile.

"Microwave popcorn," Will says around a mouthful. "Want some?"

"No... I'm fine...thank you."

Will grins and pats the seat beside him. "I found a movie on top of the DVD player; it looks like the old one you were talking about."

Hannibal checks the box "M" starring Peter Lorre and nods.

"Yes, that is the one, but...perhaps we should find another?"

"Why?" Will asks, practicing throwing kernels in the air and catching them in his mouth; there are already pieces stuck to the top of his head and all along the back of the couch.

"Could you not do that please?"

"What...throw popcorn? Bet you can't catch one, open your mouth!"

Hannibal knows the boy's request is innocent, but under the current circumstance, the double entendre seems intentional.

"Will? May I speak with you about something?"

Will's hand stops, midair. "Sure... what about?"

Hannibal walks to an armchair across the coffee table and sits down; his sleep pants gap and Will catches a glimpse of genitals.

Whoa.

Hannibal looks down to where the boy is staring and quickly adjusts himself. "Excuse me."

Will smirks and stuffs a handful of popcorn in his mouth.

" I 'ver 'ought 'ou'd be the commando type," he slurs with a full mouth; a kernel falls out the side of his mouth.

Hannibal's eyes narrow and his hand twitches, thinking how he would like to lay a few smacks on that pert bottom for its owner's impertinence. "Why did you lie to me?"

Will chokes on the last remaining kernels; coughing and hacking for a few moments.

Seeing the boy is in no real danger, Hannibal waits stoically.

Panting, Will swallows the last of the popcorn. "Why do **you** lie to me?"

Hannibal knows he shouldn't get sidetracked, but he's too intrigued not to bite.

"And what have I lied to you about, young Will?"

Will's eyes narrow at the man's tone while simultaneously feeling a flicker of fear at Hannibal's stony expression. "About your brother!"

"Nigel? What about him?"

Will chews on the inside of his mouth and says nothing. Hannibal incrementally relaxes; the boy was taking a potshot in the dark.

"Well?"

"Nothing," Will sulks.

"Alright, then it's my turn...why did you lie to me about the towels?"

To Hannibal's amazement, Will's eyes begin to twinkle and a sly grin spreads across his face; a young Puck cavorting in a bacchanal.

"Why do *you* think I lied?"

"I'm not exactly certain...explain it to me."

"I couldn't find them...that's all."

"Will," Hannibal begins coldly, "if you are going to continue to lie to me, I must ask you to leave my home."

Will's saucy air evaporates. "It was just a joke!"

"A joke?"

"Yeah! The guys on Track joke like that all the time," Will argues, hoping Hannibal's lack of expertise about American youth would work to his advantage.

"I see..."

Will knows that he doesn't but at least the man's ire is cooling. "Sorry," he mumbles for good measure then shoots Hannibal a kittenish look through his long lashes. "Can we watch the movie now?"

Hannibal keeps his face and emotions placid for the boy's benefit, but beneath it all he is a roiling mass of confusion: anger, irritation, and worst of all, suppressed arousal.

"Alright... though I shouldn't reward poor behavior."

Will's eyebrows shoot up.

"You make me sound like I'm ten years old!" He grumps and stuffs a handful of popcorn into his mouth

Hannibal presses the remote's 'play' button and solemnly turns toward the boy.

"Sometimes hvlap," he says slowly, and Will feels the man's sudden, sweet, sadness," I wish you still were."

Chapter End Notes

Baryl.
Laban.
Bølle.
Bisse.
"All the above is used for a boy that is doing something Wild, stupid or careless. If used in a good way it's when a boy is whitty, smart or acting like a idiot but in a sweet young way:)"

Source: blueyednightwing- Thank you BB!

The Run

Chapter Summary

Horny Will carries-out his sneaky plan.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Will's alarm goes off the next morning he sleeps through it. In the room across the hall, Hannibal hears the melody in his dream before it finally pulls him out of his own slumber. He looks at his bedside clock; 5:02AM. The electronic song continues.

Should I wake him? At the very least, I need to go turn it off.

Hannibal climbs out of bed and makes his way to the boy's room. He stands outside it, listening.

"Will?" He calls quietly. When there is no reply he cracks open the door; he wouldn't like a repeat of last night if the boy is up and changing. The room is dark but the phone's screen illuminates a boy-sized lump on the bed. Hannibal grins, shaking his head.

"Lazy lumpkins?!" He calls quietly.

Hannibal walks over, turns off the alarm, and peers down at a jumble of bedclothes and boyish limbs. Sometime during the night, Will had managed to pull-out both his sheet and blanket; the duvet lies in a heap on the ground.

Restless sleeper, Hannibal surmises. *No wonder he's so curled up; he must be cold*.

"Will."

Hannibal knocks the bed with his knees; the boy grunts and curls into a tighter ball. Recalling how Nigel would wake-up swinging when he was Will's age, Hannibal proceeds with caution.

"Will!" He calls a bit more forcefully. "Time to get up!"

Will turns a sleep-flushed face towards the voice but his eyes remain tightly shut.

"Dad!!!!" He grouses. "No school!"

Hannibal laughs and Will's eyes shoot open. "What the hell?" He croaks, disoriented, his eyes shut tightly again and he tries to burrow under his pillow.

"Your alarm has been going off."

Will groans. One hand flails around, searching for the duvet.

Hannibal bends down and picks it up. "Looking for this?"

Will brings his head out from under the pillow and cracks open one bleary eye. "Uggggg...freezing." Then both eyes pop open and he sits upright; he's just remembered his plan.

Hannibal occupied with folding the duvet and placing it on an armchair misses the boy's sudden transformation. When he turns around, Will is already sitting-up, rubbing his face.

"Are you still planning on running?"

Will grins. "Oh yeah! It's the perfect time! I'll be ready in five."

Will hops off the bed and hurries to the bathroom making no effort to hide the fact he has morning wood. Nor does he bother to close the door when he drops his sweats to stand at the toilet. Hannibal averts his gaze and goes back to his own room. He notices that Thjis texted him three hours ago.

Stuck in Munich- weather. Wish you had come.

Sorry to hear that. Safe travels.

Meet me there? JFK- AMS direct?

Hannibal stares at the screen, running scenarios.

Not a good time. Next week or the week after perhaps?

A week will be too late. He's in hospice.

My apologies.

Thjis doesn't reply to this last text. Hannibal doesn't mind. He has no intention of traveling in inclement weather to sit like a vulture at a stranger's deathbed.

"Ready."

Will is at his door.

"Was that Thjis?"

"Yes."

Will doesn't press him but he smiles inwardly; things are not going well between the two men. He follows Hannibal down the back stairs and stretches while Hannibal turns on some lights and disarms the alarm.

"Have your phone?"

"Yup."

"Good."

Hannibal unbolts the front door but doesn't open it. Outside, it is fluctuating between freezing rain and snow.

"Why don't you wait until it stops."

Will notices that Hannibal hasn't phrased this as a question. Will peers around the man's shoulder.

"It's fine... I have a hat."

To demonstrate his preparedness, Will pulls a knit hat over his curls. Hannibal shakes his head.

"You'll be soaked in five minutes. There's no hurry, it's still early."

Will is both turned-on and irritated at Hannibal's concern.

"We run in this all the time!"

"And no one has ever suffered because of it?"

Will scrunches up his face, trying to recall. "Nope!" He finally insists. "People run in this all the time!"

Hannibal turns a worried face outside again and Will bites his lip to prevent a doting smile. The man is sleep rumpled and warm in his pajamas, robe and slippers. His stubble is light blond and glints in the overhead lighting; Will can smell him. The idea of climbing back into bed with the older man and spending the day there while the storm rages outside is tantalizing.

Now he really does need to get out and into the cold.

Will begins to jump up and down in preparation for his run; his erection is uncomfortably tight in his spandex.

"I'm great! It'll be fine! I'll be back in thirty!"

Hannibal's resolve loosens.

"Alright, hvalp," he opens the door and a blast of frigid air makes him gasp. "Go for your run then head straight back."

Will grins and slips out of the door; immediately his face goes stiff in the freezing rain. He gives Hannibal a thumbs-up and sprints off.

As soon as the boy leaves, Hannibal relocks the door but remains with his hand on the knob. He is being pecked by eagle-ish doubts.

What if Frank would not approve? What if the boy is hit by a cab? Or slips on ice? Or gets his foot caught in a grating?

Hannibal sprints upstairs.

*Don't be bimmelim,*he chides himself as he gazes down at the view of the street. Will is nowhere in sight. *He's a big boy...he'll be fine*.

With no thought of sleep, Hannibal decides to start breakfast as he waits for the boy's return.

Coffee, omelettes, and fried bread, he decides beginnning to pull-out herbs, vegetables, and a leftover baguette. By the time he has everything sautéed for the filling, twenty minutes have passed; he wonders when he should begin the eggs.

Let me call him, he thinks, and hurries to his bedroom. He unplugs his phone; immediately the screen lights-up.

Will
Missed call

Will
Missed call

Hannibal's stomach contracts as his eyes move down the screen; at the end of the string of missed calls is a text.

Can't walk. East of Lark/Green-can you pick me up? I'm on a stoop.

Hannibal texts back.

Coming

Hannibal rushes to pull warm clothes over his pajamas his mind racing with the news. He hadn't thought to see when the calls had first come in and now he looks outside at the weather; slushy sleet.

"Fuck! Din satans nar!"

Hannibal's throat is dry with the thought of what Frank will think of his guardianship skills. As he pulls on the fur-lined galoshes Thjis bought him for Christmas, Hannibal wonders if he should alert Frank.

No...let me bring the boy back before that. I don't want to unduly alarm him.

Hannibal looks up Will's location on his phone. Apparently the boy is six blocks away; an area Hannibal is only faintly familiar with. He looks to see when the first call had come in; twenty minutes ago.

"FUCK!"

Hannibal's oath echoes in the quiet apartment.

He runs down the backstairs, deactivates the alarm, locks the door, and reactivates the alarm. Then, slipping and sliding he runs over to remove his gate's padlock. Up until this moment he hadn't thought about how many locks and codes he deals with to leave the sanctuary of his home. Now, as fear and frustration makes him clumsy he feels as though his security measures are in cahoots; keeping him away from some even more precious than his own privacy and security.

Hannibal struggles to open the frozen lock and ice-encrusted gate.

At least he's somewhat protected now, Hannibal surmises as he climbs into his car and activates the snow controls, *and not sitting in a gutter somewhere*.

Grimly, he backs out, and heads-off on his rescue mission.

Six blocks away, Will is cursing the effectiveness of his little ruse.

"Goddamn, son of a bitch it's motherfucking cold!"

The boy has already garnered unwanted attention a few times from local residents and has had to move along. Now he is huddled under his third porch, hoping he won't be booted-out by yet another commuter stumbling off to work. Ten minutes have passed since he exited a nearby cafe and he's already completely chilled. But as far as Hannibal knows, he's been marooned in these conditions for more than twenty minutes.

Where IS HE?

Will jumps in place to keep warm while going over his story; *stitch in my left side, stitch in my left side*, he chants to himself.

A twisted ankle had seemed too dangerous an excuse, but the wimpy alternative is embarrassing. Even now, he cringes when he thinks about having to admit to succumbing to such an unmanly malady.

*It'll be worth it though... just to have him help me into a bath...or better... his bed...**but where is he?!***

Just at that moment, a pair of headlights light-up the row of houses on the opposite side of the street; a truck drives slowly by.

Nope. Fuck!

Another few minutes pass; Will hasn't felt his sopping feet for a while now. The boy is so absorbed in his own misery, he doesn't even notice when Hannibal's car stops in front of him.

"WILL!"

Will's head jerks upwards. Through the downpour he sees Hannibal emerging from his car.

"Heeeeeey!" He chatters; *Showtime!*

Hannibal sprints up the steps, scoops-up the startled boy and barrels back down to his car.

Will is so shocked he can't even enjoy the sensation of being cradled in Hannibal's arms. All he feels is relief that his icy ordeal is over. Hannibal places the boy into the toasty car and belts him in. Will doesn't protest; his hands are useless at the moment and Hannibal's suppressed emotions are scarily intense.

Oh.

In his typical lust-addled teenage manner, Will hadn't considered how this scenario would affect Hannibal. He watches with trepidation as the man runs around the car and climbs into the driver's seat, slamming the door behind him. Theirs is the only car on the road.

"Ready?"

"Yeah."

"Good." *Fearguiltrelieffearguiltfearguiltrelieff.*

"Sorry you had to come get me..."

Hannibal's jaw works but he remains silent. *Guiltreliefguiltreliefguiltreliefguiltrelief.*

"Hannibal?"

"Shhhh...let's get you home." *Angerangerangerangerangeranger.*

Will, observing the shift in the man's emotions, feels the happiness of his rescue drain away to be replaced by cold dread. He stares out the steamy window and closes his eyes so Hannibal can't see the tears threatening to fill them.

A hand grips his thigh and his eyes fly open.

"Will?! Stay awake!"

"I'm fine! The heater is drying-out my eyes; that's all."

"Oh...alright...good."

Hannibal withdrawals his hand. Will wishes he could snatch it back.

"Nearly home, hvalp," Hannibal says in a deliberately light voice; Will sees through it.

"Thanks for coming to get me," he blurts out," I got a really bad cramp in my side and couldn't catch my breath."

Hannibal's gloved hands tighten over the steering wheel and he nods perfunctorily. "I'm sorry I didn't get your call...or your text until..."

"It's okay! I'm fine...I mean...I'm freezing..." Will stutters to a halt at the knotted anger in Hannibal's face, "but I'm fine."

Why is he so angry? The boy wonders.

"Nearly home," Hannibal remarks trying to calm down.

Will's teeth are chattering uncontrollably as he thaws-out so he simply nods.

Hannibal looks sideways at the boy.

"I'm just glad you're alright," he says.

Will nods again and winces. His whole body feels like its on fire, he has a raging headache, and his nose is dripping like a rainspout. He leans his head back onto the seat, feeling miserable. If he could have but heard Hannibal's thoughts, his mood would have instantly been elevated.

Thank God you're alright, kæreste...fordi jeg elsker dig.

Chapter End Notes

bimmelim-cracked/ crazy/ dotty-Word Hippo

Din satans nar! You bl*dy fool! -Word Hippo

Kæreste=Boy/Girl friend. Lovers. Dearest.

fordi- because
"Jeg elsker dig"="I love you".

How About a Nice Hot Bath?

Chapter Summary

Hannibal helps Will into a bath. For Will, a bath is a means to an end

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year!
Don't you love all the new fandom stories out there? We Fannibals know how to keep the homefires burning bright. And now "The Path" is coming in March- *smacks lips in anticipation of more tasty fanfiction featuring the Divine Dancy*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Stay there, I'll come around," Hannibal orders.

Will opens his eyes to find they're back at the Mind Palace and the rain has turned into a blinding snowstorm. Hannibal goes out to open the gate, leaving his door ajar; the windshield is immediately snow encrusted between swipes of the wiper. Snow is driving in through Hannibal's open door and Will is just wondering if he should try and close it when the man climbs back in and slams it shut. "Nearly home, hold on, hvalp."

Will nods, his teeth chattering, as much from the cold as from nerves; he's a very convincing hypothermia victim and Hannibal has to remind himself that everything will be fine. They drive slowly down alongside the building and into the garage. Hannibal goes back to shut and lock the gate but is back opening Will's door before the boy has even pulled-off his seatbelt.

"Let me," Hannibal orders and Will acquiesces, allowing the man to unbuckle him, and pull him into his arms once more; Hannibal closes the door with a bump of his hip. When they leave the shelter of the outbuilding, Will turns his head into Hannibal's chest, away from the icy barrage that quickly coats them both as they make their way across the wide courtyard to the shop's back entrance.

"I need to put you down for a moment," Hannibal murmurs into the shell of Will's ear. The man's hot breath, the closeness, and buzzing sensation of his lips sends a tingle through the boy's groin; he feels himself swelling inside his wet clothes.

"O....kay," he chatters. He's gently set-down in the relative shelter of the doorway, but Hannibal keeps a steadying hand on his shoulder as the door is unlocked and pushed open.

"Up you go."

The white, swirling world tilts as Will is lifted; then all is quiet, dark, and warm as they leave the howling winterscape and enter the Mind Palace. Will closes his eyes and tries to relax into the warmth, but his body won't stop shaking. Hannibal murmurs quiet endearments in a mishmash of languages as he carries the trembling boy upstairs and into his apartment. Will lies quietly in the strong arms as the soft words flow over him. "Will?" That at least he recognizes.

The boy cracks open one eye. They are standing in the master bedroom and Hannibal is staring straight into his face.

Gulp.

"Yeaaah?" He croaks, teeth chattering.

"We need to get you out of your wet clothes and into a hot bath. May I help you with that?"

Will bites the inside of his mouth to stop from smiling. Hannibal falsely interprets his response.

"There is nothing to worry about prins," he says lightly as he lays the sopping wet boy onto the bed. Will swears he sinks three inches into the fluffy duvet.

"Iiiiit's fiiiine," he manages to get out.

Hannibal nods and goes to the ensuite to run a bath. Will stares up at the ceiling, furiously thinking about what his next move should be.

"Alright?"Hannibal is back with a thick towel.

"Uh, huhhhhhh."

"Good, let's sit you up."

Will is lifted to a seated position and his hair briskly toweled. The sensation of being toweled dry brings him back to his childhood though this is ten thousand times better than when he was little and his dad would do it. The towel is whipped away and two warm hands cup his face and lift it up. "Still good?" Hannibal's brown eyes are dark and hooded with concern

Will nods.

"Good...let's get these wet clothes off."

Hannibal strips the sodden running shoes, socks, and windbreaker off first. Will's shivering intensifies as the wet layers are removed.

"We'll finish in the bathroom... it's warmer in there. Can you walk?"

Will debates for a split second, but nods; best not to make Hannibal suspicious.

"Up you go."

Hannibal pulls Will towards him and the boy's stomach flutters as he feels strong arms encircle him once more. *I should have done this months ago!* He thinks with jubilation as they slowly make their way towards the bathroom.

Hannibal helps Will over to the closed toilet. The boy rests his throbbing head against the man's torso. "I feeeel kiiinda dizzeeee," he says truthfully as he's sat down, *Maybe I'm getting sick for real.*

Looking down at the soaked head resting heavily against his navel, an image of soft, full, pink, lips engulfing his cock pops unbidden into Hannibal's mind. He immediately feels guilty. "Nearly done," he says, "lift up your arms."

Will feels the warm slide of Hannibal's arousal across his own mind and eagerly obeys.

Hannibal begins peeling off Will's long sleeved shirt. The boy's lithe back muscles flex and ripple as the wet material is pulled free. "Sorry," Hannibal apologies when the recaltrant sleeves prove hard to remove and Will nearly slides off the seat. When Will's head finally pops out from the top, he peers up at the man.

"Where's my hat?"

Hannibal keeps a hand on Will's naked shoulder; he really is concerned the boy might topple over at any moment.

"I don't know...it must have fallen off somewhere. I'll find it later. Lean back a moment, I need to shut-off the taps." Rather than wait for Will to comply, Hannibal wraps a towel around the boy's shoulders and pushes him gently against the tank of the commode.

Will sighs contentedly and allows it all to happen. He watches through half-closed eyes as Hannibal turns-off the water, selects a bottle from a shelf, and sprinkles crystals into the steaming tub. Instantly the room is filled with a tangy aroma Will can't name but is already is easing his breathing. Hannibal walks out to removes his own coat and hang it up to dry. From his vantage point on the toilet Will watches as Hannibal removes his coat, ridiculous furry boots, and hat. The boy's eyes widen and his posture stiffens. *Is he going to get in the tub with me?*

But no, Hannibal is simply ridding himself of his outer layers. Will slumps back down, dejected.

"Still alright?" Hannibal is back, leaning over the tub's lip, one bare, muscular forearm testing the water and mixing-in the bath salts.

"Coooold," Will says simply.

Hannibal nods sympathetically. "Let's get you in then...stand-up."

Hannibal pulls Will to his feet and rests the boy's forehead against his chest. He wonders if this part will be too embarrassing for the teenager; he can feel Will is already sporting an

erection. "Would you like to do this part yourself?" He asks, resting his hand lightly on the waistband of Will's running tights.

"Its ooookay iffff youuu doooo it, " Will chatters, through clenched teeth, but his face is heated from Hannibal's feelings at a certain *development*.

"Alright," Hannibal agrees, and pulls at the cold, wet, clinging fabric, noticing at once that Will is not wearing underwear.

Oh.

As soon as the tights clear Will's hips, his erection springs-out. It's a bit hard for Hannibal to ignore the pinkly-flushed organ bobbing against his head when he's forced to kneel and pull the tights from the boy's calves and feet, but he accomplishes it all with as clinical a manner as possible.

"In you go," Hannibal says, guiding the shaking boy into the bath. For a brief moment, the firm mounds of Will's ass are poised over the edge of the tub and Hannibal's breathe catches.

Will smiles smugly as sinks into the blissful heat and leans back, submerged except for his head and shoulders.

"Ahhhhh," he sighs, with pleasurable pain as his nerve endings sing-out in the steaming water; his eyes drift shut.

Hannibal has to tear his gaze away from the long, pale, lean, figure in the tub. Viewed this way, the boy's erection just breaching the surface of the water and its swirls of dissolved bath crystals, Will looks like a youth in a Greek mural, preparing for his part as initiate in a sacred ritual. The man silently chides himself. *Narrøv! You're not in Herculaneum and Will is not your eromenos!*

Seeking a distraction, Hannibal begins bustling around like a hausfrau: gathering-up sodden clothing and towels and depositing them into the hamper, collecting more dry towels, then going out to the bedroom to re-dress in his robe and slippers.

"I'm going to make you some tea," he says as he reenters the steamy bathroom, his mind busily occupied with a dozen simultaneous thoughts. When Will does not respond, Hannibal whips around. The boy has fallen asleep, the combination of nerves, early rising, and the comfort of the bath proving too much for him.

"Will!"

Will starts awake, kicking and splashing in surprise. "Whaaa? What's going on?"

"You feel asleep in the bath," Hannibal says, half amused, half concerned. "I'm glad I didn't go too far away."

Will blinks several times, yawns, then smacks his lips sloppily; his mouth feels dry and his stomach hurts from hunger. "Oh...maybe I should get out now."

"So soon? Wouldn't you like to wash your hair?"

"Nah," Will replies, already resting his hands on either side of the tub and beginning to rise; Hannibal hates himself as his eyes automatically seek-out the boy's softened penis. *But that's life*, he concedes, *some things naturally draws one's attention*.

"Here," Hannibal grabs Will's arm and helps him step-out onto the bathmat before encircling the slim waist with a towel and tucking-in its end.

"Thanks Hannibal," Will says, meekly, still groggy and boneless from his bath. As he stands immobile while Hannibal rubs him dry, the front of his towel-kilt begins to tent. Emboldened, Will rests his hands on Hannibal's broad shoulders then slowly, incrementally, slides them up the warm column of the man's neck until he is cradling Hannibal's head in his hands.

Hannibal freezes then looks questioningly up into Will's face.

Will finds he can't stop staring at Hannibal's thin, sensuous lips, then he suddenly darts down and presses his own, warm lips against them.

Chapter End Notes

Poor horndog Will.

Vote 1 if you'd like Hannibal to give Will what he wants (tags will be updated).

Vote 2 if Hannibal holds himself back.

Narrøv=Asshole

West Bank Handshake

Chapter Summary

Hannibal realizes Will sees his true, authentic self; this constitutes a problem.

Chapter Notes

WARNING! THIS STORY HAS TAKEN A BIT OF A DARKER TURN...DON'T READ THIS CHAPTER IF YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE HANNIBAL ACTING LIKE A CRIMINAL.

Okay.
So I've thought about this story.
Alot.

While its tempting to just go down a sweet road of a Hannibal/Will relationship story, once I really began thinking about who Hannibal Lecter is as a character, I decided that it made sense for the story to go a little dark.

No character deaths, but this chapter lightly scratches the surface of how a sadist and murderer might react when he feels his security is threatened.

You can skip it and wait for the next chapter if this turn bothers you...the road to Hannigram is rocky at times (just like in the show) but these two are going to become a couple.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal closes his eyes and leans up and into the kiss. For a brief, sweet, moment, all he knows is the sensation of long, delicate, fingers cradling his head and soft lips touching his own.

"Hvad fanden tror du at du laver!"

Hannibal's eyes start open and his head jerks up...but no... Nigel is not in the doorway staring at him with a mixture of disgust and disbelief.

Quick as a cobra, Hannibal grabs the slender hands cupped around his head and squeezes them, tight. Seemingly inconsequential details have just settled into place to create a mosaic

in Hannibal's mind: Will's months of moody jealousy, the self-invitation to his apartment, the "missing" towels, the casual nudity, the aborted run.

Will's eyes, closed during the kiss, shoot open at Hannibal's violent reaction. He stares down at the man kneeling in front of him; Hannibal's face has morphed into a stranger's, his expression stony, his sherry-brown eyes flat and reptilian. "What do you think you're doing?"

"I...I..." Will's eyes are already swimming, he doesn't understand the turn which has taken place.

"Glem det." In one clean movement, Hannibal slides his hands to Will's elbows and jerks the boy towards him as he stands.

He's played you for a fool, Hannibal's id taunts.

He's just a boy who loves you, his ego counters.

He's both, his super-ego decides; *that makes him dangerous.*

Will Graham is dangerous.

Will blanches and tries to lean away; Hannibal's grip becomes brutal

"Have I ever done or said anything that makes you feel unsafe while in my presence?" Hannibal's words echo in Will's minds as fingers, strong as iron and tight as vises, move to his biceps. The boy's heart races, driving his pulse to flutter rapidly in his pale, vulnerable neck. Hannibal leans forward until he is in biting distance; his own father's corpse had been riddled with teeth marks.

Flooded by Hannibal's fear, self-loathing, and suppressed violence; Will reacts. A blur of brown is all that registers before a sickening thud fills Hannibal's ears and his head snaps backwards. As soon as Will's forehead makes contact with Hannibal's, he becomes a deadweight slumped against the man's chest. Hannibal instinctively supports the slack body as he lowers them both to the marble floor.

"Fuck!" *That hurt!*

Hannibal turns Will and lays the curly head onto the bathmat. The teenager's face is slack and pale except for a round, raised, hematoma forming in the middle of his forehead.

"Will?" *Did he faint? Or did the kraftidiot just head butt me?*

Hannibal smoothes the hair away from the boy's face with one hand while holding it steady with the other. "Will?"

Dark, crescent lashes move against the pale cheeks, and then glazed, grey-blue eyes open and stare fixedly at the ceiling.

"Owww, " Will moans, blinking rapidly.

Hannibal breaks into a relieved grin though he tries to stop himself. He sits back on his heels. "Ow, indeed! Spasser! Why did you do that!? "

Rather than reply, Will gingerly fingers the rising bump on his forehead. "Ssssss," he hisses," ow...ow...ow!"

Hannibal shakes his head but the anger and tension he felt only moments before is already fading away. *This is his effect on me! The little charmetrold!*

Will's towel, loosened in the fray, gapes open; Hannibal pulls it closed without comment. The boy appears unaware of anything but his own throbbing skull.

"Owwwww! My head!"

"I imagine you are mildly concussed. You should visit a doctor."

"Pffft...I don't need to see a doctor."

At the sound of Will's rude, signature sound, Hannibal's eyes narrow and he feels a trickle of anger. The boy, sensing the man's igniting irritation stirs and tries to sit up. Hannibal grabs his forearm to help; Will hisses in pain and Hannibal lets go. Will's upper arms are marred by red, swollen bruises. Will follows the man's gaze downwards. "Whoa...fingers!" He observes with schoolboy admiration, twisting his arms to get a better look. When Hannibal doesn't reply, Will looks up and smiles bemusedly. Hannibal is sporting his own dark-red mark equidistant between his brows.

"We're both marked now. Each of us by the other," the boy brags, thinking about the pornos he likes the best; they all include domination, spanking, and bruising kisses. He slowly raises his hand and traces a whisper-light touch over the man's bruise. *God, he's sexy.*

Hannibal allows the boy to touch him, but his expression and emotions remain placid and unreadable; he's finally managed to close himself off completely.

Will's finger stops.

"*I'm your friend Will...I would never hurt you. But I can't always control what I feel and what I remember. That is not fair to me."*

Will pulls his hand back, trying to hide the fact it's begun to shake. Hannibal's affect has triggered an avalanche of epiphanies: Hannibal's murderous emotions and memories, his lack of concern for Richard, or Thjis' father, Nigel's behavior and sudden disappearance, his own out-of-the-blue firing and re-hiring.

Oh my God...I think I just head-butted a psycho!

Hannibal regrets his previous lack of self-control as he watches Will's face change. The old, familiar feeling of detachment envelops him like a comfortable sweater; his heart rate decreases as the boy's terror rises.

"I...I won't say anything. My dad will never see them...I promise."

Hannibal nods politely. He isn't truly listening; that's how the zone works, its business not personal. Hannibal stands in the eye of his own personal storm; cool, calm, and very much alone.

"Pleeease! Haaaanibal...Mmmr. Leeeecter!" Will's teeth are chattering.

"Stand-up please."

Tears drip down Will's face; he can't believe this is happening, that Hannibal is really going to hurt him; he can't move.

"Up, please." Familiar hands pull Will to a standing position.

"Mmmy daaaad..." Will is crying in earnest now, he's not even trying to save himself; some people are like that, Hannibal has observed, they meet their destinies meek as little lambs.

"Will be taken care of... I promise," Hannibal finishes the boy's sentence as he goes behind him and encircles the slim neck with an arm, feeling the exact moment Will's carotid arteries are impacted. *Perhaps the concussion has something to do with it,* he thinks, when after a few, quiet moments the boy succumbs to the choke hold with minimal struggle.

"West Bank handshake," Hannibal instructs the now unconscious boy in his arms. "Welcome to my world, Will Graham."

Chapter End Notes

So. What did you think?

Hvad fanden tror du at du laver!" - What the fuck do you think you're doing? (thank you blueeyednightwing)

Glem det- Originating from the danish TV show "Danish Dynamite", meaning "nope", directly translated "forget it") - Word Hippo. Danish Dynamite?! I've seen that tag on Tumblr :0)
West Bank Handshake- a choke hold (I read that in a book once- horrible- but then Hannibal would have known the lingo from back in the day.

Soulmates *Rewrite*

Chapter Summary

This is a rewrite of the last chapter so while much of remains the same, there is quite a bit of new content... the chapter title says it all.

Chapter Notes

So, after reading and rereading this chapter, and digesting some of your comments (thank you to everyone who left them!) I rewrote this chapter. I hope it flows a bit better now, I think it does, but the proof is in the pudding as they say, so please let me know what you think!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal carries the boy to his own room and settles him onto the bed; he needs time to plan his next move and Will is already showing signs of wakefulness. He retrieves a bottle of rohypnol from his safe and trickles a portion into Will's mouth, massaging the boy's throat until he swallows.

"Sleep for now," Hannibal murmurs to the unresponsive boy as he carries him to his panic room and unlocks the door. He places Will onto the cot and covers him. "I'll see you soon," the man promises then programs a monitor to synch with his phone and locks the door behind him.

Hannibal heads to his bathroom mirror to survey the damage. He touches the welt above the bridge of his nose and snorts. *He marked me alright...now...where's that cover-up...I'm going to need it.*

"Hi Mr. Lecter! Can I eat my bagels in here?"

"Good morning Nash! Please, come inside and make yourself at home."

"Thanks!" Nash replies, beating his habitual path to the break room. "Is Will working today?"

"Yes. He should be coming in today after his morning run."

"He's a good runner, just like Richard," Nash smiles, "I'm gonna go out to the kennel to feed him before I eat." Nash stops himself and laughs. "Ha! Ha! Richard! I'm going to feed Richard! Not Will!"

"That's right!" Hannibal smiles pleasantly." Good idea. By the time you've finished I'll have the marked-down items ready for you. We won't put stock outside today because of the storm."

"Okie dokie artichokie!" Nash says, in an excellent mood and disappears out the back. As soon as Nash's back is turned, Hannibal's smile disappears.

I trust Will and make things right with him, Hannibal is enumerating his options as he sorts books, *get rid of him and continue here as before,...get rid of him and start fresh elsewhere.*

Hannibal pauses for a moment and gazes around his store. *This place has been good to me,* he acknowledges as Nash bustles back from the yard and into the bathroom. The innocent normality of the other man's habits tugs at Hannibal. He sighs and resumes his work.

So much rests on what the boy's reaction will be.

Hannibal checks his live stream; Will is sleeping but restless.

"Nash?!"

"Yes Mr. Lecter?"

"I have to check something upstairs, I'll be back in less than fifteen minutes."

"Okie dokie artichokie!"

"Very good," Hannibal replies smiling ruefully; last week everything had been, "Good deal, banana peel!"

Hannibal climbs the stairs and locks the stairwell door behind him. He enters the keypad's code and slips inside.

"Will...Will...can you hear me?"

"Uh, uhhh," Will grunts with his eyes closed. He's so tired...too tired for school. Then the memory of what's happened hits him and his heavy lids snap open.

"Whaaa?"

At first, all that registers is he's lying on a comfy mattress in a strange room and Hannibal is calling his name; Will sits-up abruptly.

"I think I'm gonna..." is all the warning Hannibal has before the boy is emptying his stomach contents across the man's trousers.

"Puke..." Will gasps, coughing and gagging. Hannibal hands him a body-sized plastic bag to vomit into then steps-out of his saturated slacks, using their ruined splendor to partially sop-up the noxious puddle. Will spits into the bag, attempting to rid his mouth of the taste of bile. He knows he needs to puzzle-out this situation, whatever it is, but his dizziness and thick head is numbing his ability to reason.

"Here."

A bottle is pressed against his lips and he automatically drinks. Cold, sweet water fills Will's mouth and trickles in a cooling stream down his enflamed throat, helping to clear both his head and nausea. "Thanks," he whispers, after he's had his fill. He looks fearfully up at the man holding the bottle. Hannibal gazes back at him, but this time it's the Hannibal he recognizes; the man he's known and loved since childhood. Will stifles a sob and shuts his eyes. A hand on his shoulder makes him start.

"Open your eyes, please."

Will shakes his head and squeezes his eyes tighter. *This isn't real. This can't be real.*

Hannibal studies the terrified boy on the cot. "Just for a quick moment hvalp. I need to check something. Can you do that for me?"

The old nickname, Hannibal's violent treachery, and his own trauma are too much; Will breaks down, his shoulders heaving with sobs.

Hannibal curses himself for pitying this boy; pity has no place in his world. "Will?" He tries again then takes hold of Will's unresisting head in order to lift each wet eyelid and examine them with a penlight. Warm, copious, tears splash onto Hannibal's fingers and drip down his wrist. "Good boy. Lie back down."

Will obeys at once. Hannibal helps settle him onto the cot and covers him warmly. Will burrows his face into the soft pillow, attempting to muffle his sobs. The man checks his watch; eight minutes since he left Nash, and presumably Frank will eventually calling to check-in on his son. Hannibal unlocks the bathroom to retrieve towels and soap, finishes the clean-up then stuffs the soiled items into the plastic sack.

Half-dressed, he kneels beside the tousled head. "What is your phone's password?"

Will's crying has ceased, but he doesn't move or open his eyes. "Hannibal," he whispers then pulls the duvet over his head before curling -up into a tight, little ball.

Hannibal's throat tightens. He stands and slowly inhales a deep, cleansing breath, holds it, then exhales.

"Thank you."

Without another word, he gathers up the bag and lets himself out of the room. On impulse, he stops in the corridor to watch the tiny image of the boy on his phone, but Will never stirs; he appears to be legitimately sleeping.

He trusted you, Hannibal's mind suggests.

"He loved me," Hannibal says aloud as he returns to his bedroom to re-dress and check Will's cell; twenty new Instagram posts, seven failed Snapchats, and numerous banal messages from classmates, nothing from Frank. *His father doesn't suspect a thing,* he surmises as he selects a clean outfit and goes to the kitchen to grind beans for his coffee press.

Few people braved the elements that day, allowing Hannibal to send Nash home before lunch; he's just locked-up when Frank phones, asking for Will. Hannibal easily deflects the man's request.

"He's out back sorting stock...did you text him?"

"I did not...figured I'd call you and speak to him on your phone. If he's busy, don't fret him, just tell him I called...and could you do me a favor?"

"Of course."

"Tell him that I switched schedules with Bruce so I'll be here through Wednesday night. But that I'm gonna take the rest of the week and next week off."

"I'll tell him," Hannibal promises, pleased with this fortuitous reprieve; four days is plenty of time to begin a new life if need be. "When does his Christmas holiday begin?"

"This Friday. That's why I volunteered for the drill and shift change; so we could spend it together."

Hannibal allows Frank to ramble on about this and that while he checks his live stream; Will is awake and roaming around his makeshift prison.

"....we talked about renting a car and checking-out some universities upstate," Frank is saying and Hannibal snaps to attention," but now with the storm and all, we might hav'ta change plans. Did he tell you 'bout that?"

"He didn't," Hannibal acknowledges," but it sounds like a wonderful plan. He did mention he would like to take a run later...should I allow him?"

Frank chuckles warmly.

"That's alright. He runs 'round in all sorts of weather. Tell him we'll catch-up tonight and hammer-out what we wanta do during our time off."

An image of Frank gazing out a dirty window as he waits for a boy who never returns flits across Hannibal's mind. "It was good speaking with you Frank, but I apologize; I must go and take care of some pressing business. Nash says 'hello,'" Hannibal adds gazing across the deserted shop.

"Tell him 'hey' right back! And thank you again for having Will over. I know he's having a better time at your place then just sitting in a cold apartment playing video games all day."

"It's been my pleasure, good bye now."

"Good bye."

So... Will hadn't been lying about his heat not working. A truth nestled amongst lies...always the best way to conceal falsehoods, Hannibal thinks approvingly as he ascends to the second level.

Four years spent in your company? The little Åndsbolle's learned more from you than even he probably realizes! Nigel's voice taunts. *Maybe that's why he's attracted to you...to what you are.*

Tell me, lillebror! What am I? Hannibal counters with his hand raised over the panic room's keypad.

A monster! A chorus of voices reply; Hannibal recognizes Richard's amongst them.

If I'm such a monster...then why do so many people love me? He challenges the void.

That's an easy one dummkopf, the sneering contempt in his father's voice sends an involuntary quiver down Hannibal's spine, *it's because they don't know what you are!*

Hannibal's hand, poised before the keypad trembles slightly and he pulls it down to his side. He closes his eyes, centers himself, then relaxed and confident once more, checks his video stream; Will is sitting on the bed, eating crackers.

What are you going to do?

For the first time in a long while Hannibal finds he's missing his brother's cigarette-roughened voice and even rougher company.

I don't know yet. But when this is all over I'll come for a visit, Ni-nog...I promise.

When this is all over...you may not have a choice, Nigel's smarmy voice shoots back, *And don't call me Ni-nog!*

Hannibal is grinning as he enters the code and opens the door.

When Will awakens the second time, he feels so much better, he gets-up to snoop around; he already has a good idea what this little chamber is. *I'm in Hannibal's panic room!* He thinks,

taking-in the banks of darkened and disabled equipment, cases of food, and minimalistic furniture. *Is this in the basement? Or upstairs? Probably upstairs... I bet it's the room by the stairwell...the one that he said housed the building's environmental systems.*

The door which Will assumes leads to a bathroom is locked. *Where am I going to take a leak or a dump?* He wonders unhappily as he roots through a box of supplies. Will pulls out a bottle of seltzer and a box of water biscuits and sits on the bed to eat. *At least I'm not going to starve*, he's thinks as he gloomily chomps the tasteless crackers. Without warning, the outside door opens and Hannibal steps inside.

"Hello."

Will drops the bottle; fizzy water sluices over him before the container goes skittering across the polished floor.

"I see I should have stocked more towels," Hannibal remarks lightly as he punches in the key code to lock them both in.

The dry crackers have turned to lead in Will's stomach and he feels as though he might barf again.

"Neg, neg! No more of that!" Hannibal orders, grabbing a bottle of still water. "Drink this! Small sips."

Though Will obediently takes the bottle, his stomach is a pool of magma ready to erupt. He swallows, forcing the roiling mass back down. Hannibal watches without comment as Will sniffles and wipes his mouth his sleeve.

Hannibal knows that Will's concussion is very slight. If he were to give him a mortal head injury in some out of the way location, there was an excellent chance the body wouldn't be found until Hannibal was well away.

"What are you thinking about?" The boy whispers.

Hannibal looks down at the teenager; Will's eyes are stark in a pasty-white face.

"I'm thinking that when you head butt someone, it is customary for the other person to lose consciousness."

A beat of silence passes between them as Will's sluggish brain parses out the man's meaning. Then his nostril's flair and his back stiffens. "Well excuse me if I'm not a UFC expert!" Will snarks, sounding so much like his normal, snotty self that Hannibal smiles."Why did you choke me out!?"

Hannibal's expression darkens and Will instantly regrets his outburst; he submissively lowers his head.

"I'm asking the questions... Look at me, Will!"

Fearful grey-blue eyes with their thick rim of dark lashes instantly meet his own. Hannibal nods approvingly at the instant obedience and leans comfortably against the door.

"Thank you...now...for the last time...why did you head butt me?"

The blue eyes waver but Hannibal's belly warms when he notes that they spark with sulky rebelliousness. *No... don't be a fool. This boy is dangerous.*

"Cuz...cuz I wanted to get away but you wouldn't let go."

"I don't remember you asking me to release you...in fact, wasn't that your plan all along? To trick your way into my bed?"

This is plain speaking on a whole other level and Will's face flames hot with confusion. Normally, Hannibal doesn't believe in playing with his victims, but he feels vindicated in doing so now; the boy has been both disrespectful and rude.

"Well?"

"Are you going to kill me?" Will asks in a tiny, trembling voice.

Thoughtfully, Hannibal traces a thumb over his own faint brow without taking his eyes from the figure on the cot. "Why would I do that, hvalp?" He purrs. Hannibal's tone is deceptively sincere, but Will shivers at its undertone. He's not certain what will appease the man so he says nothing.

"Enough with the games, Will." Hannibal's voice is a lash and the boy's stomach clinches. "Tell me the truth! Why did you come here this weekend?"

Will looks down at this hands feeling the same out of body experience he'd felt after his break-up with Tony.

"I...I..."

"Yes, go on."

"I... I wanted to seduce you."

The room is completely silent; Will wishes the floor could open up and swallow him.

"You wanted... to seduce me," Hannibal repeats and Will's shoulders nearly reach his ears he's so embarrassed.

Then the man begins to shake.

Will's mouth drops when Hannibal's shaking turns into a full-belly laugh, his muscular body rocking against the heavily fortified door. The boy hops up; his fear replaced by righteous indignation and teenage impudence. "What's so funny 'bout that!?"

Hannibal stops mid chuckle; Will gasps when he finds the man is now inches away, but truculently juts-out his chin.

"Do you know what I am?" Hannibal's eyes roam over the boy's face until they settle on his lips; Will nervously licks them.

"Uh...what you are?" Will draws in a wheezy lungful of air and nearly topples backwards when Hannibal's hard body presses flush against his; strong hands grasp his shoulders and pull him back.

"Come," Hannibal purrs, "you must have some idea... tell me."

Will's brain can't handle so many mixed signals; his eyes dart frantically around Hannibal's face but he can't form a sentence. When the boy refuses to answer, Hannibal's hands tighten.

"Are you afraid, hvalp?"

Will swallows and shakes his head.

Hannibal's eyes glitter like a snake; he's enjoying this. *Such a bold, reckless boy! And I've been like an uncle to him all these years?! Is this the product of Frank's parenting? I can't believe it of him.*

"Will...does your father know your purpose in coming here?"

Will's nose scrunches scornfully."No! Why would I tell him that!? That's weird!" Will has never been so simultaneously scared and horny; it's a horribly confusing combination. Hannibal grins and Will blushes. *This is so fucked-up!*

Hannibal doesn't speak, just continues to stare into Will's face until the vibe turns from sexy to creepy again.

"What?" Clever Will appears to be doing mental sums; what his arithmetic comes to remains nebulous. "Tell me what you're thinking."

"Can I tell you downstairs?"

"What's the matter hvalp? Don't you like my guest room?"

Will's eyes dart from the man to the dark monitors and back. "Why am I in here?"

Because I'm weak."Because I don't know what to do...about you."

Hannibal's honest answer slips-out before he can censure himself.

"Don't think about it," Will whispers as once again the velvety waves of Hannibal's arousal laps against the shore of his mind. He experimentally touches the man's hand which jerks at the contact."Let's just get out of here... I promise I won't try and run away."

Hannibal steps back, never breaking eye contact; Will holds his breath. He's still not exactly sure what's going on but he feels Hannibal's violent conflict. *He loves me...he totally wanted to kiss me...so he panicked and freaked-out.*

"Alright Will, let's go back to my apartment." *If something goes sideways I still have four days.*

Hannibal interlocks one of Will's hands with his own. It's the first time they've touched this way in years, but now, it's a surprisingly intimate gesture; something boyfriends would do. Will studies Hannibal's profile as he's pulled through the door and out to the second story landing. *Called it.*

He waits meekly as Hannibal re-secures the room, all the while staring down at their fingers threaded together; his hand is still smaller, but it no longer looks like a child's compared to Hannibal's. He's still smiling at this thought when he looks up; Hannibal is studying him and Will feels the jolt of the man's quickening libido.

"Come along."

Hannibal pulls Will down the hall, getting a measure of the teenager's demeanor as they pass both sets of stairs. Will never hesitates, allowing himself to be led past every possible escape route and into Hannibal's apartment. Hannibal drops Will's hand, bolts the door and smiles widely.

"There... no one will be bothering us for a while."

But even this thinly veiled threat doesn't seem to affect the teen. Rather, Will appears completely absorbed by the view out Hannibal's window; truth is, he's already missing the feel of Hannibal's hand in his. "It's snowing."

"We're supposed to get three feet by midnight; come, sit down Will...let's talk."

"About what?" As always, Will is clued-into Hannibal's emotions and the man's shift from sensuous interest, to suppressed suspiciousness hasn't escaped him.

Hannibal waits until Will is seated where he'd watched a move the previous night, then moves an armchair directly across from him. *What a difference a day makes*. "We need to speak of what has happened and what our plans are...what are your feelings about all of this?"

"I feel like I got hit on the head and then drugged."

Hannibal leans back and tilts his head. "I can't answer for the first, but for the second... I apologize."

Will runs his hand over the nap of the chair's upholstered armrest and scowls. "Hmmm... is that what you do with *Thjis*? Drug him and then do kinky shit to him?"

Hannibal casts a scandalized look at the boy, not certain how to answer; Will's smart mouth has no such compunctions. "I would let you, you know...do kinky stuff to me I mean."

And at that moment, the image of little Will Graham entering The Mind Palace for the very first time is forever replaced by the beautiful young man with the glowing eyes and questionable life choices fidgeting on his sofa. Hannibal feels the pull of attraction, but decades of learned behavior are not so easily altered.

"I don't want to have sex with you Will."

Will's fingers freeze and his shy expression instantly changes into a beetling glower. Hannibal struggles not to smile at how adorable the boy looks when he's furious.

"Why not!? What's wrong with me!?"

"Nothing."

"Then what!? Is it because of *Thjis*?"

"Maybe I'm not attracted to children."

Will's blue eyes and rosebud mouth form three perfect 'O's.

"I'm not a child! I'm almost seventeen! By the time you were my age, you'd already screwed plenty of people! Don't tell me you hadn't!"

Hannibal bites the inside of his mouth. He bitterly regrets allowing Will to kiss him; the boy is too tempting and what's worse, clearly not afraid of him. "Let me make one thing perfectly clear hvalp," Hannibal growls, "nothing is ever going to happen between us... I will never be attracted to you...do you understand?!"

The fire in Will's eyes is instantly doused, replaced by fat, welling tears. Hannibal watches as one detaches from the rest and runs down Will's flushed check, quickly followed by another then another.

Hannibal's fingernails bite into his palm. "Good...we finally understand one another. "

Will takes a few quick breaths, tries, fails to control his quivering, downturned mouth, and stares sullenly down at the floor, each blink releasing a cascading tear; tiny prisms captured by the lamplight.

Finally. This is safer for both of us. "If I were to let you go, it must on condition of a promise...Will? Are you listening to me?"

Will lifts shattered eyes. "No."

"No?"

"No!" Will shouts, jumping to his feet; Hannibal instinctively does the same. "Stop lying to me!"

Stunned, Hannibal's stares at the boy who, at this moment, uncannily resembles Frank.

Will contritely bows his head. "Please," he pleads in a tiny, distressed voice," please don't lie to me...I... I...can't take it when you lie to me."

The apartment is so hushed, Hannibal can hear the tap, tap, tap, of Will's tears as they hit the floor. He wishes he could take a moment to massage his own throbbing temples. Will looks up, his youthful face contorted by adult love and suffering. "I love you," he whispers, slowly and cautiously walking towards the man, as though he is afraid Hannibal might bolt. He stops only when his stockinged feet are nearly touching the tips of Hannibal's brogues. "And I know that you love me too," he whispers, " what's wrong with that?"

Will's painful declaration hits Hannibal in his solar plexus, and in the process evicerates into oblivion something dark, and tight, and cruel which has festered in him for decades. He sways in place before closing his eyes and leaning forward, resting the full weight of his skull against the boy's forehead; Will's breath is hot and sweet against his face.

"Nothing, hvalp...there's nothing wrong with that," he finally manages to mutter throatily, barely registering when two sweaty hands grab his own or that Will's slight frame quivers to support him. " Nothing at all," he repeats opening his eyes to look deeply into the purest of blue, blazing with more love for him than should rationally exist. He gently pulls his hands from the boy's grasp to cradle Will's face, bringing his lips to the corner of Will's mouth where it curls upwards.

Will lets out a tiny sob and instantly turns into the kiss, throwing his arms as far around the broad back as he can reach. Every fear and worry he's harbored evaporates as Hannibal's lips devour his own and a hot, strong, tongue forces its way into his mouth. Will moans, feeling like he might pass-out.

"Breath kæreste," the man chuckles when they are forced to pull apart, panting. Will laughs shakily without opening his eyes as Hannibal kisses every inch of his face, paying special attention to the wet, delicate, fluttering eyelids before working his way down the boy's neck, yanking Will's sweatshirt aside to suck hungrily at his collarbone.

"I'm..." Will warns but it's too late; he's already shooting his load.

"Are you alright?" Hannibal asks, thinking Will might need to vomit again. Will's distress is immediately explained when the man feels the boy's ejaculate, plentiful and blood-hot, seeping through his sleep pants and wetting Hannibal's slacks. He grasps Will's head and pulls him into a tight embrace. "Don't worry about that søde," he murmurs into the rosy ear as he kisses it, "it happens. Besides," Hannibal continues, pulling the curly head away from his chest, so he can look the boy in the eye, "I think it would be better to wait."

Will frowns and shifts uncomfortably."Wait? Wait for what?"

"For you to be older."

"I can't wait four months!" Will yells, so comically outraged that Hannibal laughs in his face.

"Four months? Who said anything about four months?!"

Reddening, Will drops his head, but Hannibal's hold on his shoulders won't allow him to hide on the man's chest again. "What does it matter?" Will whines, so close to his goal that all logic and reason has been driven out of him.

"It matters," Hannibal says, tilting his head down until the boy looks at him again," and we have other things to discuss right now."

Will groans dramatically and wriggles with frustration and discomfort; he doubts he has any blood left in his brain to think at this point; his erection is already reviving. "I know, I know, head butt, choke-out, what you are, blab, blab, blab," he gripes looking beseechingly up at Hannibal through his lashes; "Can't we take a shower first and then talk?"

"If we shower together, kæreste," Hannibal replies with conviction, "I won't be able to stop myself."

"Good!" Will is about to vehemently exclaim when a finger is pressed to his lips and a hand is clapped round his nape. He tenses under the harsh grip.

"I will only say this one time, hvalp...I'm in control here...you will do what I say... when I say... and how I say. Do we have an understanding?"

At this pivotal moment, Frank's easy, homey voice rings-out in Will's head, *He's just bluffing, son, pissing on you to mark his territory...Don't let him! Stand your ground! Push back*!

So Will Graham, stiffens his spine, stares fearlessly into a psychopath's face, parts his lips and pulls the admonishing finger, deep into his mouth, sucking it hard, as though it was a cock. Dumbstruck Hannibal doesn't react, not even when the boy releases his wettened finger with a slurping plop.

"Yes sir." Will replies, in his own kittenish growl, and smiles wickedly.

Chapter End Notes

I'd appreciate the feedback :-D
better ?
worse?
the same?

Ashes Ashes We All Fall Down

Chapter Summary

Hannibal's home is raided.

Chapter Notes

Just a few loose ends which I felt needed to be addressed, not a happy chapter, but probably a necessary one for the arc of this story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

By the time Hannibal's six sense alerts him something is about to occur, it's already too late.

BOOM
SMASH

The building is hit by what sounds like a freight train, and the last thought Will has before the room fills with dense, choking smoke is that terrorists are attacking the city. Windows are shattering, alarms are blaring and then;

KABOOM

Hannibal's body is on top of him, pushing him to the ground, what feels like a shock wave hits and Will must have blacked-out, because when he opens his eyes, Hannibal's luxurious apartment is gone, replaced by a dark, hellish world of stinking, stinging smoke. He's flat on his stomach, peering-out of streaming, swollen eyes and though the floorboards are shaking and vibrating beneath him, sounds are muted as though he's under water. The next time he opens his eyes, he's still face down on the floor but the room is bright and smoke free; black combat boots surround him. Will jerks in fear but he can't move his limbs; he's hogtied.

"Ahhh!"

His voice is strange and nasal sounding in his own ringing ears, and when a face hovers into sight he clamps his lips tightly together. Hands clasp his shoulders and he's flipped onto his back. He lies, gasping, gazing up at three Kevlar, riot geared men staring down at him. Through his blurry vision he sees POLICE stenciled on their vests. One man kneels down beside the boy. Will sees his lips moving but the words are indistinct over the roaring in his ears. *Hannibal! Where is Hannibal!?*

Will must have been screaming his thoughts because the officer's face changes and he twists away, signaling to someone. Will tries, fails, to sit up and lies back, panting. A woman's face appears, then gentle, gloved hands are touching his face, measuring the racing pulse in his neck, manipulating his head and neck before working their way down the length of his body. The woman is joined by a man who sets a black container by his feet and begins pulling-out plastic packages. Will is turned sideways and the pain in his arms, shoulders, immediately eases when the zip ties binding his limbs are cut. He grunts with relief as hands carefully guide him back down to his back. A cold solution is squirted into his enflamed eyes and dribbles down his face, neck, and ears. Will sees now that the man and woman are paramedics. *Hannibal. Is Hannibal okay*? He closes his eyes, trying not to panic as his t-shirt is cut away and various cuffs and wires are attached to his body. Gloved fingers prod tender spots on Will's arms and he flinches. Someone is gently tapping his cheek and he opens his eyes; both paramedics are staring down at him.

"'ow...you..'is?" The man asks, indicating the sensitive marks on his forearms.

Though he can only understand one in three words, Will knows exactly which bruises the medic is asking about; he shakes his head to show he doesn't understand but can't control his blush of embarrassment. The man and woman share a quick look and then he's being sat up and a scratchy blanket draped around his bare back. Still in a stupor, Will blinks and rubs his eyes and face while the medics pack-up their equipment and converse with two watching men. Then Will is pulled-up to a standing position and he stares around in disbelief; it looks like a bomb has gone off in Hannibal's living room. Furniture, lamps, books, accessories, and artwork are strewn across the once pristine floor. The last thing the boy notices before he's whisked-away through the kitchen is snow, driving in through a shattered window and piling-up across the rug.

"Where's Hannibal?"

Neither of the men holding his arms and guiding him down the hallway appear to have heard. Will swivels his head back and forth; the apartment is swarming with cops, some in uniform, some in regular clothes. They all stop whatever they're doing and stare as the boy passes. Will flushes, feeling naked in just his loose sweats, bare feet and trauma blanket.

"Can someone get him a pair of shoes!?"

Will starts at the barked order, the hearing in his left ear having partially returned. He stumbles and misses the first stair, but strong hands are there to catch him so doesn't fall as he's led slowly down the back staircase and on past Hannibal's office. Cops are here too; digging through drawers, closets and trashcans. Will passes the break room where the contents of the frig and cabinets have been dumped into a pile on the floor.

"Hey! You can't do that!"

Will's voice is a squeak, barely audible over the rumble of voices and activity but he knows he's been heard when the fingers holding his biceps tighten and he feels the men's anger and frustration at his outburst. When they push their through the swinging gate and come to a stop by the massive mahogany counter.

"Where are those shoes!?

"Here!"

A pair of Hannibal's sneakers, habitually stored in the mudroom, are thrust into Will's hands. That's when he hears Richard going crazy in the back garden. "The dog!" He protests, as he's dragged over to an armchair and pushed down into it.

"Put the shoes on."

Distracted by the sound of yipping and baying Will cranes around the man. "What about the dog?!"

"Put the shoes on kid!"

Frightened and confused, Will mutely stares out to where the dog is kenneled and the officer looses patience. He grabs the sneakers out of Will's hands, kneels down, and shoves the boy's bare feet into them but doesn't waste time tying them. "There! Let's go."

Will's elbows are grabbed and he's at the open doorway before he knows what's happening. At that moment, Will's foot crunches on something which makes a muted, yet familar sound. He looks down; it's the antique door chime broken and already covered in snow and shards of glass and wood. Will's stomach drops and he stops dead in his tracks; seeing the little bell he's heard nearly every day for the past four years, savagely ripped from its bearings, trampled, ruined, and forgotten brings a sob to the boy's throat. Thinking the teenager is reacting to the cold, one of the men pull his blanket around him more securely. "Come on, we're just down here."

It's only after Will has been deposited into the back of a police cruiser that the man asks him his name.

"Will Graham," the boy answers through chattering teeth gazing out of the car to Hannibal's store.

The Mind Palace is brightly illuminated and brimming with frenetic energy. Dark figures can be seen through every window on every floor; it looks like a monastary being sacked by Viking raiders.

Then the police car pulls away from the curb and makes a slow, careful U-turn; the detective riding shotgun is speaking into the radio.

"How old are you Will?"

The cop asking the question studies the boy in the rearview mirror. Will stares at the back of his head.

"Sixteen."

"Mmmhmm. Is Mr. Lecter your dad?"

"No. Where is he? Is he alright!?"

"He's fine...So, Will, we need to get in touch with your parents. Tell Officer Morris here how to do that. "

"Where are we going? What's going on?"

"We're going to take you down to the station, ask you a few questions then we'll release you to your parents. Tell Officer Morris their names and number and we'll take care of this."

Will numbly repeats Frank's name and phone number and waits, huddled in the corner of the seat.

"Hello Frank Graham? Mr. Graham, this is Officer Morris, I work out of Vice here at the local precinct, and I have your son Will in protective custody...Yes sir, that's correct...He's fine...Yes sir...I'm sorry, but I can't discuss that right now...No, sir...Yes sir...Yes, sir... I know this is hard Mr. Graham, but I'm going to ask if you could hold the rest of your questions until we can meet down at the station. Yes sir... Yes sir. That is correct... Detective Kurt Morris. Good deal, we'll be speaking soon. Thank you, goodbye."

Scared and angry, Will refuses to answer anymore of the officers' questions, and eventually they give-up.

The rest of the ride is quiet except for the intermittent crackle of the radio, the *swish, swish, swish* of the wipers and the name *HannibalHannibalHannibal* running in a continuous loop through the boy's head.

When the battering rams break Hannibal's front and back doors, his first thought is that the Serbs have finally caught up with him. But almost at once, the faint shouts of "Police" make him realize his error.

Fucking Nigel.

"Fuckingbøsserøvmotherfuckerhoreunge, " a steady stream of obscenities pour through Hannibal's clinched teeth as he pushes Will to the ground, drapes his body over the stunned teen, and covers both their heads with sofa cushions. A window smashes and tear gas canisters activate around them. Then a stun grenade goes off and Hannibal, unable to cover his ears, goes temporarily deaf. Stoically, he clutches Will, waiting until the vibrations of the floor boards tell him they've been found. Blind and deaf, he's yanked away from the boy and thrown face down, where he passively lies while being searched, cuffed, then frog-marched down the stairs and into a waiting van.

I'm going to kill my motherfucker little brother when I get out of this.

"Where's my son? Will Graham? Where is he?"

"Mr. Graham? Detective Morris, thanks for coming down."

"I have a taxi waiting outside but no money..."

The detective sighs, nods, and pulls out his wallet.

"Hey, Noel? Pay the cab outside." He hands two twenties to a uniformed cop. "Be sure I get my change back!" He yells facetiously before turning back to Frank.

"Thank you," Frank is still panting. "I don't get paid 'till Friday."

"I hear you! Mr. Graham? Let's go in here to my desk so we can talk."

Frank follows the detective into a room filled with desks and overstuffed filing cabinets. "You can have a seat there while I grab the file...Okay, here we are."

Frank obediently sinks into a plastic chair and looks around the crowed, noisy space while the detective flips through papers then frees a page from a clip.

"Do you recognize this man?"

Frank examines the paper; it's a photocopy of Hannibal's mug shot.

"Yes, what has happened? Is Will alright?"

"Will's fine sir, he's waiting in another room having a cup of coffee. Can you tell me who the man in the photo is?"

Frank's eyes narrow, and for a few moments, the officer wonders if he's not going to cooperate; the detective takes a swig of water the better to observe him.

Finally, Frank speaks. "That is Hannibal Lecter. He owns a bookstore my son works at. Will was staying with him this weekend while I was working a long shift."

"I see..." The officer consults his file. "And your son is... sixteen?"

Frank nods. "Yes, he'll be seventeen in a few months."

"Okay... and you are the sole guardian? "

"Yes, my wife left when Will was a newborn."

"So, no shared custody?"

"No... and we're not officially divorced...but we haven't seen her for...well, neigh-on seventeen years. I have no idea where she is."

The detective scribbles a few notes then goes over to pull two forms from a filing cabinet and hands them to Frank.

"Sir, with your permission, we'd like to administer a couple tests. "

Frank studies the papers. "Permission for drug testing...and... permission to administer a sexual assault kit!?"

The detective leans back in his swivel chair. "Can I get you something to drink? Water? Coffee? Soda?"

"And if I were to refuse permission?"

The detective frowns. "Well, then CPS would become involved...Will would be kept, in protective custody, and, I'm fairly certain, a judge would rule in our favor and allow us to test Will. There's no need for alarm, sir...these tests are simply precautionary... just standard procedure."

Frank looks up to see the man is offering him a ball point pen and a clipboard. The officer lowers his voice, looking sympathetic."As his dad, don't you think it's better...for all of you, if we can just rule a few things out?" He waggles the pen as he speaks.

The detective's insincere sympathy causes Frank's mouth to quirk, like he's eaten something sour. Glaring, he grabs the pen, waves away the offer of the clipboard, and violently signs the two documents, ripping both of them in the process before handing them back. The cop doesn't seem to mind they've been torn; he simply checks the signatures, adds the date, and places them into his manila folder.

"Great," he says, standing-up." Stay right here, I'll be back."

"You have serious problems Hannibal. Your buddies dimed you out ...and if you're not smart about this, you're going down for all of it."

Hannibal nods in agreement. "I understand. I am waiting for my attorney."

"We have eye witnesses, we're going through your home and business as we speak. By this time next week we'll be in your safes and deposit boxes. Man-up! Help me so I can help you."

Hannibal smiles politely.

The cop opens a folder and pulls-out Frank's signed permission forms, throwing them on the table in front of Hannibal. "And then there's the boy."

Hannibal's eyes glitter dangerously.

"This here alone? Multiple counts Hannibal: false imprisonment, providing controlled substances to a minor, contributing to the delinquency of a minor, statutory rape; we're talking thirty to life."

Hannibal hums as though in agreement .

The cop crams the papers back into his folder then sits, staring at Hannibal. His whole team agrees this guy is dirty, but somehow, their case is falling apart before their very eyes. The fact a minor was on the premises when they picked Hannibal up was an unforeseen complication; apparently their surveillance team hadn't noticed Will enter on Friday and not come back out. Still, the detective figures Will can serve as a bargaining chip, albeit a weak one.

Officer Morris stands up and pushes his chair back in; they can't put off the lawyer any longer.

"Alright my friend... You think about it...I'll be back."

Hannibal folds his hands and studies the peeling walls.

The detective goes to the next room where his team is gathered around two monitors; Will and Hannibal's.

"So?"

"They haven't found anything yet...not even a GD pipe or dime bag. And where are his tattoos?"

"Maybe they were wrong about that...they're already wrong about where he operates from."

"Could have relocated... had the tats removed?"

"The id is pretty old; maybe the kids made a mistake or maybe the meth-heads in the neighborhood have a beef with Lecter. I have a bad feeling he's going to be Teflon."

"It's him...it's got to be him. Let him cool his heels...we'll definitely get him for having the kid stashed-up in his place."

"What does the father say?"

"Not much, but Tom's running a check on him right now... we could keep the kid; apply pressure that way. Maybe they'll sell each other out."

"I'm sure he gives two fucks about the kid. Where are we on the subpoenas?"

"The judge can't hear them till Wednesday."

"Seriously? This guy has 'flight risk' written all over him...this motherfucker is going to walk! What are we asking?"

"Half a million. But unless we find something soon, he's out of here. "

"Well... shit...Gentlemen? This one might slip away but we still have the rest. Good work... gonna go speak with the DA then finish my report. Give me a heads-up when he's done with counsel."

Frank had expected anything but a furious boy dressed in a unfamiliar t-shirt and sneakers when he's finally shown into the interrogation room.

"Will! Are you okay!? What happened!?"

"I'm fine dad! Can we get just get out of here?"

Frank looks at the detective for confirmation.

"Sure. Your dad can take you home. But we'll probably need to have you back; stay in town. "

Frank nods. "All right. Are you ready son?"

Will considers ripping-off the t-shirt one of the detectives loaned him but decides it's a bad idea. "Yes!"

Will sprints out of the tiny room, following exit signs until he reaches a door requiring a card. The boy's relieved when no one pays them any special attention and a worker buzzes them out without comment. Once out of the secured area, they're immediately met by a uniformed cop.

"Frank Graham?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm Officer Bolin. I'll be taking you to the clinic. "

Frank glances over at Will. "Thank you officer."

Clinic?!

"He doesn't have a coat?"

"I'm standing right here, I can answer your questions," Will snarks.

The officer twists to look at the boy, his club, gun holster, and belt rub together, making a sound like a shifting saddle; Will instantly decides he hates that noise.

"No one's hurting you, boy!" The man drawls, then looks pointedly at Frank. "You might wanna teach your boy some manners before his mouth gets him into trouble."

Frank bristles but nods respectively.

"Yes sir, and we appreciate the trouble you're going through." He glares at Will who has the brains to look abashed.

"You're welcome," the man swipes a card and opens a door." Out through here."

The officer leads the father and son to a private parking lot where they're loaded into the back of his patrol car.

"Where are we going!?" Will whispers to Frank.

"The clinic," the cop answers, punching something into his computer."They're expecting us."

Will's mouth drops open; he doesn't like the sound of this.

Fuck.

The doctor in charge of Will's examination opens his door, and beckons to Frank.

"Are you dad?" He asks looking down at his notes but doesn't wait for Frank's reply. " Dad? Want to come on in here for a minute?"

Will is sitting on the examination table dressed in scrubs and fuming.

"Okay, so we're done, " the doctor says consulting his notepad. "He's fine dad. He has a very slight concussion... see that bruise on his forehead? And his ears will be ringing for another day or so, but his eyes and breathing look good. You should know that some bruising on his arms is consistent with being forcefully restrained, but he says he doesn't remember anyone grabbing him there." The doctor glances up to gauge Frank's response. "Will's not showing physical evidence of forced sexual assault, but we've taken his clothing for testing and we'll know more when we get the kit results. Just be aware that those take weeks, even months, so don't be concerned if you don't hear back right away...Okay...so, overall, he looks good. Just make sure he takes it easy for the next couple days and consult your doctor if he develops headaches or vomiting. Any questions?"

Frank shakes his head.

"Okay? Great! Nice meeting you Will. Bye dad."

Will sneers. He's pissed-off, humiliated, and irrationally blames Frank for everything that's happened. He jumps off the table and darts out the door.

Frank follows his son out of the clinic and over to the waiting police car, his mind racing with everything he's been told today. This time, the idling cruiser is a warm haven which Will eagerly clamors into while Frank follows more circumspectly. He remains uncharacteristically silent when asked for their address so it's up to Will to tell the officer where they live before scooting as far away from Frank as possible.

Neither the father nor son gazes shift from their own windows for the duration of the forty minute ride.

When they are finally deposited outside their apartment, Will feels as though it's been years since he's seen it.

Frank unlocks the main door and they wait in uncomfortable silence for the elevator. His anger finally cooling, Will sneaks little glances at his father. He knows Frank is royally pissed, worried, and saddened, but he's not sure if all its directed at him, Hannibal, or the situation itself. As the elevator makes its slow decent, the boy rubs his sore, tired eyes. *All I want is a hot shower and sleep, but there's no way dad is going to let me go to bed yet...Shit!*

The elevator opens, smelling like fresh piss.

Nice.

Hambone is ecstatic when Will and Frank enter their apartment.

"You'd better take him out," Frank warns," but not too long...we need to talk."

Happy for any reprieve Will grabs a jacket, a pair of snow boots, Hambone's leash and races his dog down the stairwell and out into the freezing night.

"Good boy!" He praises as Hambone makes patch after patch of yellow snow.

"Will!"

Will jerks around.

Hannibal, looking immaculate in a thick overcoat and fur hat is walking towards him.

"Hannibal!"

Will nearly falls face first into a snow drift trying to run towards the man. Hannibal reaches him first and lifts him in a bear hug while Hambone barks with excitement and runs around them, tangling Hannibal's legs with his leash.

"Stupid dog!" Will laughs, but there's a catch in his throat and tears prick his eyes.

"Will," Hannibal puts the boy down but keeps a hold of his shoulders. "I'm so sorry you had to go through that! Are you alright? "

"I'm fine, what happened to you?"

"I was taken to the police station and questioned. As soon as I was able, I came here, to apologize to you and your father. Do you think he'll see me?"

"I don't know...Maybe you should come by tomorrow; give him a chance to cool down."

Hannibal nods. "What are you going to tell him...about us?"

Will's happy expression dims. "I have no clue...what should I say?"

"That the bruises on your arms were an accident, caused by my grip on you during the raid... and that we received the marks on our foreheads diving for safety. And if it comes up, the semen on your pants was the result of a wet dream."

Will's expression is one of complete mortification and Hannibal has to force himself not to kiss him then and there.

"Will...they'll find my saliva in your mouth and...it is possible they'll find Rohypnol in your urine if they're looking for it. Better to admit to your father that we kissed then to be caught in a lie."

Will stares. "Rohypnol? The date rape drug? When did I take that? "

"I gave it to you after...after the choke hold. A very slight dose, but it takes several days to dissipate out of the system. There's nothing we can do if they find it...other than lie and say I gave it to you to aid your insomnia. "

Will looks as if like he might cry and Hannibal quickly hugs him again. *I might have to leave here after all*. " Will, you'd better go back up now; your father is waiting for you."

"Wait! What happened? Did they arrest you? They told me that they have proof you're a drug dealer,and a pimp! They trashed your whole place! I don't care about the Rohypnol! Why is this happening!?"

Hannibal smiles down at his loyal yet foolish little... Lover? Friend? "Don't worry about any of that bølle; everything is going to be fine. I'm just glad that you're alright. Go back to Frank. Ask him if I may call tomorrow."

"Fine...bye," Will grumbles. It doesn't seem fair that Hannibal is already back to the normal routines of his life when Will's world is imploding all around him.

"Don't worry hvalp, we'll get through this." *I know I will at any rate*.

Hannibal gives Will's arm one more squeeze then turns back to his car. He's off to dinner and then to place several important phone calls, one of which must be to Lavinia, whose frantic messages alerted him she'd been questioned by the police.

Dinner, a bit of business, and then I'll check into a nice suite. Of course all the really good places are already booked-up for the holidays, he acknowledges, waiting until Will is safely back in his apartment building before climbing into his rental car. *Just another case of making due while I rise-up from the ashes... too bad they won't let me back in yet; I have just the wine to celebrate with...if it hasn't already been smashed or stolen.*

Frank is seated in Grandpa Graham's easy chair when Will returns. Hambone rushes to his water dish and gulps thirstily while Will dries him with a couple dish rags. Frank patiently waits until Will has finished taking care of the dog and shucked- off his boots.

"Have a seat son."

"Can't I take my shower first?"

The thermostat hasn't budged above 54 degrees for weeks now and he's already chilled and damp as it is.

"No, we need to talk...now."

Will flings himself onto the couch."Fine."

Frank turns so he can face his boy. He takes a few moments to gather his thoughts while Will silently rehearses his answers.

"Do you know why the police raided Mr. Lecter's home?"

"They say he's a drug dealer and involved in human trafficking."

"That's right. He was taken into custody by a SWAT team, son. They save that for only the most dangerous criminals."

"So?! I don't know why that happened. He's not guilty!"

"Will...the officers painted me a pretty horrible picture of Hannibal. They told me he's been... grooming you...preparing you for a sexual relationship for years - that he's already given you drugs. Is that true?"

"Jesus, Dad! No! You act like you don't even know me! Or Hannibal!"

"Hannibal? Since when do you call him by his first name?"

"Since I'm almost seventeen! Since I asked him if I could and he said 'yes.' Since I'm not a little kid anymore!"

"Alright," Frank's calm demeanor is getting on Will's nerves, he wishes Frank would yell, scream, loose his composure, anything but how he's acting now," you say you've never taken drugs and you aren't having sex with Hannibal. How did you get those bruises? Can I see them?"

"Oh my God, dad!" Will's face is bright red. "They were lobbing tear gas at us! Hannibal was just trying to protect me! I thought we were gonna die!"

Frank closes his eyes, and rubs his face, looking haggard. "What about that hickey on your collarbone?"

Will's hand flies up to the collar of the oversized shirt; *oh shit*.

"Okay...so we kissed...once!! But I kissed *him!*" *This was not how this weekend was supposed to go!*

Frank rubs his jaw line and Will feels his father's anger slowly build.

"You kissed Hannibal...and he kissed you back...if that love bite on your neck is any indicator."

OhmyGod. "Yeah."

"William James Graham! Why would you do such a thing? Enough with the half lies. Tell me everything!"

"That's it! I went to his place...we had dinner, I got to drink a glass of wine...which you gave me permission to do! That night, I...I guess I had a sex dream, okay? And then I woke-up...sticky...and kinda horny, so I kissed him and he kissed me back. And the next thing I know the apartment is exploding! That's all! Don't believe me if you don't want to, but that's all that happened!"

Frank shakes his head helplessly.

"I don't think you understand how serious this is, William. How do you think your school is going to react when they find- out you're mixed-up in this. There's a good chance they'll rescind your scholarship."

"That's not fair! I didn't do anything!"

"Maybe not, but this isn't good for their reputation."

"So!? I'll go to public then!"

Frank looks completely devastated and all of Will's lingering anger towards him is extinguished in a flood of guilt. "What are we going to do? Should we get a lawyer?"

"A lawyer costs money son. Now... I'm not telling you all this to make you guilty or punish you...but you should know that my job requires that I have a squeaky clean record."

"Dad! They aren't going to fire you over this!" Will's cheeks and ears are bright pink. *This can't be happening!*

Frank sighs softly; no use in upsetting his son more than he already has, but still...

"Well, we'll have to wait and see. It looks like they'll have Hannibal on lock down for a wh-...what? What is it? Do you know something I don't?"

"He's out already...I just saw him outside, " Will hurries on before Frank has a chance to yell at him. "He came to apologize but I told him tomorrow would be better...after we'd talked."

Frank looks long and hard at his son; he's struggling with something dark and ominous.

"What's the matter?"

Frank looks away, ashamed, and Will feels a tingle of fear chill his belly.

"I don't know if you remember this...but when you were a little boy...I...I did something.... unforgiveable."

Will's heart is in his throat. "Was it the man who hurt the dog?"

Frank's clasped hands go up to his face, hiding his trembling mouth as he stares at his son; he drops them to his lap. "I never told you there was a man."

"You...I...I figured it out..." Will falters.

"What did you figure out?"

"That you were fighting with a man...that the blood all over you was his... not the dog's."

"Oh, bubba..." Frank blinks rapidly, " I am so sorry you had to go through that," he lowers his head," and the ugly truth is... he died cuz of what I did...I killed that man."

"Why are you telling me this?" Will whispers.

Frank's face is grey. "I'm telling you... because once the law starts digging around in a man's past, there's no telling what they'll find...And because you're grown enough that I owe you the truth."

"Who was he?" Will asks quietly.

"Nobody to me...never met the man... I only heard 'bout his...passing...by chance; someone from work knew someone who knew one of his cousins."

"It was an accident!" Will argues.

Frank's clear-blue eyes blaze in his stark face.

"It was...and it wasn't."

Will feels like he might barf. "Daddy," he breathes and Frank's eyes go soft with concern.

"It's okay, bubba," he says, getting-up and sitting down beside his son. "It's going to be okay," he repeats, pulling his cold, wet boy into his arms and hugging him tightly. "We're going to be okay."

Later that night, when they're finally ready for bed it's Will's turn to be the comforter, in the only way he knows how.

"Dad? Can I stay out here with you tonight?" The boy asks, shocked at how happy and relieved this little offer makes his dad feel.

"Uh, sure!" Frank agrees trying not to appear too happy."Good idea, we'll be warmer that way."

Will nods and they pile every quilt they own onto the sofa bed, climb in, and quickly find their most comfortable sleep positions.Will drops-off right away, but Frank can't sleep; too caught-up in a swirling vortex of anxiety. Soon, Will's breathing changes to little whiffiling

grunts and Frank grins; happy in a primal way to be in close, physical proximity to his boy. All too soon, however,his worries overcome his feelings of contentment.

Why is Hannibal under suspicion? And why was he released so quickly? Has he had me fooled this whole time? Frank's body flushes alternatively hot and cold thinking about the portrait of Hannibal painted by the detectives. *Child molester? Pimp? Drug trafficker? Did I give my son to a monster?*

Oh my Lord!

Agitated, Frank gets out of bed as carefully as he can and begins to pace the length of the small apartment.

Why would Hannibal want such a young child to work at his store? I should have known...this isn't the country, folks here just don't do that...and then his brother...what was it...Nigel? He left under odd circumstances.

Frank stops in his tracks.

But...Will...he's thrived under Hannibal's friendship...hasn't he?! And Hannibal's been like a brother to me all these years...helped me...saved my life...I owe him so much.

Frank goes to stare out the window.

But why would Hannibal kiss my boy? Or any boy? And what about Thjis? Where is Thjis? Is he mixed-up in all this. Is Lavinia?

Frank rests his hot, aching head against the freezing pane and closes his eyes.

Lord, help me...I don't know what to do here and I'd appreciate some guidance.

When Will wakes-up, he's in a strange bed. *Huh?! Oh, yeah... I slept out here...but where's dad?* He soon sees him, slumped in his easy chair, fast asleep, an open Bible on his lap. Will gets out of bed and walks over to his father; he carefully pulls the book from the man's loose grip and glances down at it. *Psalms...daddy always goes to Psalms when he's worried*. Will pulls two quilts off the sofa bed and tucks them around the sleeping man. Then he takes a quick leak before leashing Hambone and pulling on some warm clothing. Just before grabbing a set of keys, he scribbles a quick note telling Frank he's taking Hambone for a long walk and he has his phone. Then he lets himself out of the apartment and into the biting morning air.

" Whoo....freezing! " He checks his phone as Hambone marks his territory; no new messages.

The boy looks up and down the quiet street, considering.

I have nothing to lose.

" Okay! Come on good boy, let's go!" He commands his dog, taking off at a brisk trot to The Mind Palace.

Chapter End Notes

I wanted to say " thank you"
To everyone who takes the time to comment or hit the kudos button- I appreciate you!!

I don't know about you- but I'm ready for this story's angst to be done !!!
(this story should be done in another 4-5 chapters- maybe less.)

The Holly and The Ivy

Chapter Summary

Hannibal leaves.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal's phone chimes. He groans and pulls it off the nightstand; Thijs' photo glows up at him.

I don't know why you thought that 'scene' was a good idea.

Don't bother coming to the apartment.
It's over.

Hannibal is instantly alert and very pleased.

So...that's where you are lillebror.

Will's head is throbbing by the time he gets to The Mind Palace. He stands on the sidewalk and stares.

Police tape cordons-off the entrance way and an official looking paper has been affixed to the doorjamb. And though Plywood has been installed to replace shattered panes, and all the detritus has been tided-up, the brownstone looks neglected and deserted. Winking to keep his tears at bay, Will walks over to the side gate and absentmindedly rattles the heavy chain.

"Will?"

The boy twists to see Lavinia getting out of her station wagon; Hambone yelps joyously.

"What are you doing here sweetheart!?"

The endearment and Lavinia's concerned face brings a lump to the boy's throat. He stoops down to pet his dog and surreptitiously wipe his eyes. "Just looking around. Do you know where Hannibal is?" He asks, finally looking up.

If Lavinia finds Will's use of Hannibal's Christian name strange, she doesn't show it. "He's staying at a hotel midtown. How are you? How's Frank dealing with all this?"

"I'm okay, dad's okay."

"Hey there!" Lavinia greets Hambone after she sets down a box. "I'm going to be babysitting your friend!"

"You're taking Richard?"

Lavinia shoots Will a shrewd look.

"Yup, I got hornswaggled into it...Nash doesn't even know yet." The woman sighs unhappily and indicates a car load of empty boxes. "Can you grab a couple of these?"

Will pulls two boxes out of the station wagon and watches, puzzled, as Lavinia pulls a set of keys from her parka.

"It's as cold as a witch's tit out here!" The woman complains as she searches for the padlock's mate. "I should have retired to Florida like a normal person!"

Richard, hearing voices begins baying and Hambone enthusiastically joins-in.

"Shhhhh! " Lavinia hisses, finally locating the correct key in the jingling bunch. " Technically we're not supposed to be here!" She unlocks and unwraps the chain then helps Will tamp down the snow so the gate can swing open. "Success! Go on ahead; I want to swing this shut after us."

"Okay."

Will spends the next fifteen minutes playing with Richard while Lavinia is busy inside. Though the kennel is heated, Will is happy Richard will be with Lavinia. *Dog's should be indoors with their human pack*, he thinks, laughing at Hambone's attempt to capture Richard's swishy tale in his mouth. The boy looks over his shoulder; Lavinia is by the backdoor stacking boxes.

"Just need a couple more," she calls over. "Boy, they did a number on this place. It's going to be a while before it's shipshape and Bristol fashion." The woman saunters over. "How's the doggie?"

"He's okay but his food is in the garage." Will looks up at the brownstone. "Will they arrest us if they catch us here?"

"Probably," Lavinia says breezily. "But at this point...I can't say I give a flying fuck." She fixes the boy with a level gaze. "Do you have anything inside you need to get out?"

Will blushes; *Lavinia knows.*

"Ummm...just my bag, they took my phone but I got it back. "

"Uh huh," Lavinia says eyes twinkling. "Well, you better go scoot and grab what you need."

Will is halfway to the door when his phone rings; he grimaces when he sees who it is.

"Hi dad...I'm at the bookstore with Lavinia," he gives the woman a cocky grin and she sticks her tongue out. "I know... I know... I know! Dad? Here, let Lavinia talk to you."

Will thrusts the phone at the woman and darts into the building.

"Frank?"

"Lavinia? What's going on?"

"Hannibal asked me to pick-up Richard and gather a few things for him. Will was here when I pulled-up; he's just getting his overnight bag."

"So you heard what happened?"

"A detective called me last night. Near as we can figure, it was a case of mistaken identity."

"Mistaken identity? " Frank sounds incredulous.

"Truth is stranger than fiction. Sounds like his brother was involved in something a while back."

Back in his apartment, Frank's eyebrows shoot-up. "Nigel."

"Yes."

"Has Hannibal been able to clear his name?"

"From what he told me they have no case. They didn't uncover anything in the search and he has a solid alibi."

"Yes, they asked me about the dinner party as well."

"I've known Hannibal for almost eight years Frank...they made a mistake; it happens."

"Did he tell you about Will?"

"About..."

"That something...romantic is brewing between those two."

Lavinia swings her eyes towards the door; Will is nowhere in sight. She sighs.

"He mentioned that Will...how did he put it...'made a move on me.'"

"Humph! That's what Will told me...I can't believe my boy would do som'em like that! "

Why the hell not!? "Well... " Lavinia isn't certain how to broach such a delicate subject with what appears to be an irate father. "Are you angry with Hannibal about that? " She lowers her voice. "How far do you think they went?"

Frank blanches, thinking of Will's hickey and the sexual assault kit.

"Kissing... that's what Will told me."

"That's what Hannibal said. Did you file a complaint?"

"Against Hannibal? No, I haven't."

"Will you? "

"I don't think so...I don't know...my head's still spinnin'."

Lavinia nods then stiffens when Will appears, holding a sports bag. "Frank? Will's back," then in a carrying voice." Are you working today?"

"I should be there now but Will was gone when I woke up and I needed to find-out where he was...guess I freaked-out a little. "

"Completely understandable! You work days now?"

"Just for this week, I'm off all next week then I'll go back to my night shifts."

"How wonderful! I want you both to come over for Christmas Eve dinner!"

"Well..."

"No! I won't take 'no' for an answer; don't worry I may not cook as well as Hannibal but I can still cook! Hi, Will! Want to talk to your dad?"

Will ignores the proffered phone. "Can I go with you to see Hannibal?"

Lavinia's heart sinks. "Ask your father," she advises, handing him the phone.

"I heard...Hannibal just texted me; he's on his way to the airport. "

Watching Will's face change, Lavinia turns to go back to the house. *Oh boy...here we go!*

Will's body has gone numb. "Lavinia didn't tell me that! Can he do that? Won't he get in trouble?!"

"He was in a hurry and asked me to let Lavinia know...honestly I don't know if this could hurt him, chief."

Will's legs feel like limp noodles. "When's he getting back?" *He's taken off...he doesn't really love me...he lied to me...again.*

"A week? Maybe two...he wasn't sure."

"He's going to miss Christmas!?"

Peeking out a window, Lavinia sees Will slump against the dog run. She clicks her tongue and walks sadly up the back stairs. *Poor kid! He's so worked-up! Hannibal should never have led him on... But I can't blame the boy...Hannibal is one sexy man.*

Nigel is humming a Christmas carol when he stops short in front of his door. The slip of paper he keeps lodged under the jamb is missing; someone has been in his apartment, could still be there now. He steps sideways, his hand finding his gun.

"It's me Dummkopf. Don't shoot, I'm opening the door. "

"Hanni? What the fuck!?"

The door to Nigel's apartment swings opens and sure enough, Hannibal is there, grinning broadly. "Glædelig Jul Duri lillebror... or should I say Zalig Kerstfeest?"

Scowling, Nigel shoves his way inside. "Why the fuck didn't you warn me?" He gripes, going into his tiny kitchen and bending down to his diminutive frig. "Beer okay?" He asks, pushing his Glock into its hidden holster when he feels the unmistakable pressure of a gun's muzzle against the base of his skull. "Is this about your little bitch of a Dutchman?"

"Put your gun down."

"I will if you will."

"You first...and your knife."

"Fine...back off."

The cold press of metal disappears and Nigel's lip curls as he turns to face his twin.

"What is this all about?"

"Gun, knife."

"Nigel pulls his gun and knife free and places them on the kitchen counter.

"Happy?! You too."

Hannibal nods and goes to place a revolver on Nigel's coffee table; weapons aren't altogether necessary.

"Sit...please."

Nigel chooses a leather arm chair while Hannibal elegantly settles himself on the couch.

"Happy now?"

"No Nigel...I'm not happy."

"Well? It's not my fault that svans mistook me for you."

Hannibal smiles but it doesn't reach his eyes; Nigel sneers.

"That psycho act doesn't work Hanni...now have a beer and tell me why you're here or leave...I'm too tired to play games."

Hannibal's smile tightens. "Four nights ago I was raided; they searched my work, my home. They nearly destroyed my store."

Nigel shakes his head with disbelief. "That's terrible...but what does it have to do with me?"

Hannibal hands his brother a sheet of grainy black and white photos; Nigel peers at it. "Screen shots from a security camera...look familiar?"

"Ohhhh..." Nigel says, and then barks a staccato laugh."This was years ago! And they're only now getting to it?!"

Quick as a cobra, Hannibal's gun is back in his hand.

"I'm here for my Christmas present...from you."

Hannibal cocks his head; in his mind, Nigel looks as he did when he was ten years, just waking-up, covered in his own urine, knowing how their father would react. The quiet moment stretches into seconds; Nigel's pits prickle with sweat.

"Well?" He finally demands. "What the fuck do you want Hanni? Money? An apology?"

"I'm sorry Ni-nog," Hannibal apologizes to the ten year old brother he will always love.

A flash of light, a puff of smoke, and Nigel slumps back against his seatback.

Hannibal walks over and stands for a moment over his brother's corpse. Tenderly, he smoothes a strand of hair over the entrance wound."Tell far Glædelig Jul Duri for me barnlille," he whispers.

The holly bears a berry
As red as any blood

Lavinia warbles as she plunks out the tune on her upright. Will groans and shovels a huge forkful of pumpkin pie into his mouth. Grinning, Frank joins in the chorus then stops, mid-

stanza; just outside the front door, a tenor voice has joined-in.

And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.

"Hannibal!"

Will's plate crashes to the ground and in a flash he's pulling open the door to reveal a beaming Hannibal.

The boy launches himself at Hannibal's chest and is pulled-into a tight embrace; the man resting his chin in warm curls.

"Hello Will," he murmurs, surprised and touched by such an enthusiastic welcome. "I'm home."

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry Nigel! I really am :0(

Wolf In Sheeps Clothing

Chapter Summary

Frank and Hannibal have a heart to heart; neither man tells the exact truth to the other.

Chapter Notes

Phew! This was a tricky chapter *wipes sweat from keyboard*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Their happy reunion is cut short.

"Hannibal."

Hannibal looks up at Frank's approach, his mood taking an instant nose-dive. Frank looks... angry...betrayed...heartbroken.

Hannibal's smile falls off his face. He gives Will one last quick squeeze before pushing him away. "What's wrong?" Will demands looking up into Hannibal's face. The boy's sunny blue eyes cloud as Hannibal's fear tickles his ribs. *Is it something I did?*

"Will, Hannibal and I need to...discuss a few things."

Will turns to face his father, but purposefully backs-up, trying to return to the security of Hannibal's embrace. Hannibal's hands grip his shoulders, stopping him.

Will's frustration explodes. "Dad! I'm not a little kid anymore! If you need to say something to Hannibal, say it now! Say it here!"

Frank's head quirks once at his headstrong son. Hannibal tracks Frank's thoughts like Leviathans in the Deep: *Who are you really? What do you want with my son? Is there going to be violence?*

"Will, I would prefer to speak to your father... alone," Hannibal gives Will a little shove towards Lavinia. She immediately takes the hint, tapping the boy's arm to attract his attention.

"That's a good idea! Will? I could really use some help cutting more pie!"

Will yanks his arm away; he's fucking done.

"What do you want to know dad?!" He sneers, pupils blown-wide. "What we were doing before the cops detonated those fucking bombs? Getting ready to fuck! That's what!" Lavinia gasps. Unrepentant, Will squares-off against his father. "There! Happy now?!"

Frank's glacial-blue gaze darkens. He has never laid hands on his boy, but he'll do whatever it takes to keep him safe.

Hannibal shakes his head disapprovingly. "Will! Stop!"

Shocked at Hannibal's chastising tone, Will spins to peer up into his face. "What?!"

"That is no way to speak to your father." *And it's not the truth*. Will's mouth droops. Hannibal locks eyes with Frank over Will's head. "Frank and I need to talk...alone."

Humiliated, Will looks from Hannibal to his dad and back again. "Fine! Since I'm obviously too *retarded* to be included in this conversation, I'm taking the dogs for a walk!"

Bright pink, and cursing under his breath, Will grabs two leashes, and heads out the door. Hambone and Richard, alert since hearing the " W" word, trot happily behind him.

SLAM

The apartment is suddenly preternaturally quiet.

Lavinia clasps her hands in front of her, looking pointedly at Frank "Is this to be a gentlemanly exchange?" She cocks her head and stares over her glasses at Hannibal, "or will I need my pepper spray?"

Hannibal smiles ruefully; Frank, who is still reeling from his son's attack, does not. "Pepper spray will not be necessary," Hannibal promises." Where would you like us?"

"You boys take this room; I'll be in the kitchen."

"Right," Frank says curtly and chooses a seat on the couch. "Please," he gestures towards a nearby chair.

Hannibal nods and sits, automatically noting his surroundings. *Four feet separation, ten pound ammonite fossil...glass lamp...discarded dessert fork close by Frank's right foot.*

"I'm here to talk...not attack."

Frank's statement halts Hannibal's thought process; apparently the father shares a portion of his son's gift. Hannibal nods, adjusting his cuffs before meeting Frank's gaze. "Yes, I as well."

"Good."

The room falls silent.

In the kitchen, Lavinia closes one eye, the better to peer through the crack of the swinging door, 911 already entered into her phone. *Just in case.*

"Shall I...?" Hannibal begins.

"Yes...I think you'd better."

Hannibal drops his eyes; he finds it hard to look at his friend. *Former friend.* That thought alone threatens to send him into a tailspin of regret and shame. *He deserved better*.

Frank waits.

"I'm sorry Frank...I..." Hannibal stutters to a halt. *For Will*. " I'm in love with your son... I love Will."

He bows his head, monitoring Frank's response through lowered lids.

Frank tenses, his hands tightening into fists as he jerks his head to one side.

Hannibal's stomach clinches. *That's it then. He's disgusted...can't even look at me.* Hannibal is free-falling; wondering if Frank will be at the bottom to catch him. No one but Nigel has ever bothered with him before. And now Nigel's gone.

Se dig lige! Modbydelig! Værdiløs!Har der nogensinde været en mere ulækker, værdiløs, dreng som dig?!

Hannibal's shakes his head sharply, hoping to jar the cruel, sadistic voice free. *He's not real...he can't hurt you.*

In the kitchen, Lavinia grips her phone more tightly.

It takes a few moments for Frank to regain his composure and when he does, he is shocked at what he observes; Hannibal's face, nearly unrecognizable, transmogrified into a mask of fear and self-loathing.
It's disconcerting, seeing him this way, the very essence of the man stripped-bare. Raw. A flood of compassion, sweet and cool, spreads through Frank's body. Every story, every veiled hint, every nuanced evasion Hannibal has so glibly provided about his background suddenly makes sense. *As the twig is bent, so grows the tree*.

"Buddy."

Just the one word, but its utterance emboldens the hurting man; hardly daring to hope, he looks up to meet Frank's gaze.

"Yes?" Hannibal's sad, sweet, longing cements Frank's resolve.

"I forgive you."

Hidden in her eyrie, Lavinia baptizes this moment with tears.

Hannibal's mouth works. "Thank you Frank...thank you." Hannibal's face twists, his chest heaves.

"You okay?"

Hannibal shakes his head. "My brother..."

Frank stares, confused. "Your brother?"

"My brother..."

Frank watches as Hannibal's shoulders begin to shake. In the kitchen, Lavinia presses a palm to her mouth.

"My brother...loved me...protected me..."

"Nigel? He was a good to you?"

Hannibal nods, Frank places the man's emotional age at roughly ten; he gentles his voice accordingly. "He is still a good brother to you?"

" Dead...Nigel's dead."

Frank's eyes widen."Hannibal! When did that happen? I'm so sorry!"

Hannibal's nostrils flare and he shakes his head robotically. Frank leans back. The sheep is a wolf once more; cornered, terrified, ready to savage any helping hand.

Savage. Feral. Dangerous. A claxon sounds in Frank's mind. He glances down and notices Will's abandoned fork; he wonders if he could reach it in time. He looks in the direction of the kitchen; Lavinia's head is a dark silhouette barely visible behind the sliver of the open door. *No...Not that way! Take control!*

" Hannibal. Look at me."

The brown eyes refocus and swivel towards him.

"It's gonna be alright."

Hannibal stares intently at Frank's mouth, as though he's a lip reader.

"Hannibal," Frank waits until the other man's eyes twitch upwards. "It'll be alright." Hannibal's eyes widen. "We need to figure out a few things...but can we do that; right? You and I? Figure it out together?"

Hannibal's Adam's Apple jumps. His body feels weak, like the time he'd hemorrhaged for days.

Both men start when the sound of running precedes a loud pounding on the front door. Keeping his eye trained on Hannibal, Frank jumps to his feet to open it.

Will barrels inside, pink-cheeked and wind-tousled; the embodiment of innocent, boyish energy. The dogs trail after, snuffling happily from the cold, Will stares, open mouthed, at

Hannibal's slumped form. Frank closes the door behind him. "Hannibal?"

Hannibal doesn't look up. Will's body heats; an unholy anger born of ferocious love. "What did you do to him!?" He demands, lips drawn into a snarl.

Frank looks over at the man, struggling to regain his composure. "Will..." he starts but is cut short; Hannibal is signaling for their attention.

"Will." Hannibal's voice is so meek and reed-like, the teen's anger is swallowed-up by fear. Will takes a step closer; Hannibal raises his hand. *Stop.* "Will," Hannibal's voice is stronger, but still strangely devoid of life. "I'm sorry."

"No!" Will shouts, bringing Lavinia into the room at a trot.

"No!" He screams, whipping around to face his father. "You can't make him do this! I won't let you!" Will turns his stricken face back towards Hannibal. "Don't let them! He doesn't understand! They don't understand!"

Hannibal's hand fall to his lap.

Frank shoots Lavinia a warning look; she nods.

The dogs sensing Will's upset are whining and slinking around his feet.

"Will..."

"NO!"

Will runs to the couch and drops to his knees."Please," he begs, cringing at how high his voice has climbed. "Fight for me...fight for us...please Hannibal."

Hannibal takes Will's cold hands into his own.

"It may not be possible Kæreste," he murmurs, swiping his warm thumb across Will's cold cheek. Will chokes down a sob. *It's happening! I can't do it! I can't!*

Hannibal looks to where Frank and Lavinia are standing, shoulder to shoulder. Over the sound of the dogs' worried mewling, he nearly doesn't catch Will's throaty reply.

"Then take me with you."

What? What did he say?

"Take me with you," the boy whispers again, his eyes impossibly large and shining. He brings Hannibal's hand to his lips, kissing its scarred knuckles. "Wherever you go, let me go too."

"Will," Frank's voice is sterner now and Will fights against a lifetime of obedience. "Don't be so dramatic! Git up and sit on the couch! We all need to talk."

Hope flaring, Hannibal grasps Wills forearms and pulls him up next to him. The boy squeaks at being manhandled, but soon, finding himself pressed close against the man's side, relaxes, resting his head against the broad shoulder.

Apprehensively, Lavinia looks at Frank, but he doesn't seemed concerned. He gestures Lavinia to sit and settles onto the chair beside her.

"Hannibal? Will? You both understand that I could end this relationship? Press charges... Have a restraining order issued. But I won't."

Will's glower melts a bit.

"Not yet, anyhow."

Will's expression turns sullen again; Hannibal wonders if maybe the boy is going to be disappointed after all.

"Whether I feel comfortable with this situation is gonna depend on if I get the answers I need to hear. And to do that, Hannibal and I need to continue our talk...alone."

Will groans and puffs his cheeks out, spoiling for a fight, but stops when Hannibal squeezes his leg. The boy looks trustingly up into his face and subsides.

"Yes, Frank, I would appreciate that."

Dispatched to purdah in Lavinia's bedroom, Will is a display of spectacular sulkiness.

Trying her best to ignore him, Lavinia has taken-up her knitting. "Want a red or white stripe?" She asks, examining the scarf meant to be the boy's Christmas present; still might be if she hustles.

"Red, white, whatever," Will moans. " I really don't care!"

"Red it is!"

Will goes to the door and stealthily cracks it open.

"Shut it!" From his position in the living room, Frank's bat-like ears have picked up on the tiny sound; Will quickly complies.

"Patience! " Lavinia laughs, knitting needles clicking furiously. "Let the men have their talk."

"I'm a man!" Will complains. "Why can't I be in there?!"

"Pffft," is the only reply the boy gets, so he crosses his arms and slumps against the door; determined not to say one more word to the infuriating old lady, even if she begs.

Brat. Lavinia smiles to herself, fingers flying. *I wonder what secrets and lies are being exchanged out there right this very moment?*

"I need to be able to trust the man my son has choosen to be with."

"Yes."

"I need some answers Hannibal, and I need them now."

Frank's demand comes as no surprise. "Alright."

"What happened to Nigel?"

"He was killed...in Amsterdam."

"How?"

"I shot him."

Frank's mouth goes dry; his mind a seething mess, providing an image of bloodied corpses strewn across Lavinia's antique rugs. Will's sweet, thirteen year old voice sounds in his head:

When Mr. Lecter was talking about his childhood and how exciting it was...I felt... weird...like he was thinking about something horrible...but ...but he wasn't scared by it. It felt like... he liked it.

"Frank, I give you my word. I would never hurt you, Will, or Lavinia. You're my family."

Frank swallows down hot, stinging bile, his eyes narrowing. *Nigel was your family! Your twin!*

"I understand...you don't trust me. But I have nothing to gain, and everything to lose by telling you the truth."

"Hannibal..." Frank shakes his head. "Hannibal...please, don't tell me anymore."

"Nigel murdered Richard."

"My God, Hannibal! Why?"

"I have no idea...drugs, money, revenge." *Two out of three.*

"He admitted that to you?"

"He bragged about it."

"Did you tell the authorities?"

"No."

"So you tracked him down and murdered him in cold blood."

"Yes."

My boy has been with a murderer this whole time...two if I'm completely honest.

"Please believe me, I didn't want to. I loved my brother, " Hannibal's eyelashes are wet, "But he was a mad dog. I knew if I didn't stop him... events... would continue to occur."

"That's why there are police Hannibal. You killed your own brother...your only kin. Unless you've been lying to me about that too."

Hannibal doesn't blame Frank; for him, lying is as natural as breathing. "I had bad experiences with the police, starting when I was a child. But I didn't lie to you about family; Nigel is...was...my only living relative."

Frank grunts an acknowledgement. "He's done...did... some horrible things. Did he ever threaten Will? Like he did those other boys?"

"No...Would that have made a difference?"

Frank sighs, disappointed in himself. "Probably." Frank forces himself to get back on track. "You're not worried about the police?"

"No."

"They never charged you?"

"They don't have enough evidence. However, I did set the detective on my brother's scent. Obviously nothing will come of it."

Frank's face changes; Hannibal's interest is piqued.

"What concerns you about the police?"

Frank doesn't even question Hannibal's shrewd extrapolation of his micro reaction. He bemusedly rubs the back of his neck." I don't much appreciate the law sniffing 'round.

Hannibal nods; titillated. *Oh Frank... what would they find?*

"Are you concerned for yourself? Or Will?"

Frank gives Hannibal a knowing look. "I don't rightly know...anything is possible."

Hannibal's spirits rise another notch; their exchange has become oddly liberating. He tries to remind himself what rests in the balance.

"You love my son?"

Hannibal pretends not to notice the sudden change in topic. *Now I'm truly curious*. "I do. As strange as that may seem. I love him."

"He's young enough to be your son."

Hannibal inclines his head. "Yes."

"And Thjis?"

"Ended our relationship; before all this."

"Convenient." Frank's mouth twists cynically.

"Perhaps, but it's the truth nonetheless. He went home to spend time with his father and unwittingly encountered my brother...that was what led to our break- up... and me to Nigel."

"He tricked Thjis into thinking he was you? Why didn't you just tell Thjis the truth?"

"Honestly? I didn't care. For a while now it's been clear I haven't been meeting his expectations."

"Hmmm..." Frank pauses, considering his next line of questioning. " When I asked you three years ago why you chose Will to work for you. Were you lying?"

"No. I had no romantic interest in Will; he was a young child."

"Still is to my way of thinking."

"Yes. I'm sorry."

"The heart wants what the heart wants?" Frank's voice is a lash.

"No...Yes...I don't know." Hannibal's expression and voice softens."Will's...special. He can feel what I feel. He's known, at some level, what I've done in my life...but he still loves me. Unconditionally."

Frank's jaw works, thinking of his son. "Yes. He's intuitive, empathic. He's a good boy, Hannibal." Frank's voice cracks. " He's my whole world."

"I understand. I know I don't deserve him, or his love."

Frank grimaces. "How long have you two..."

"The day of the raid, " Hannibal interjects." Nothing happened until that morning when he kissed me. I had inklings...but no proof until that moment."

"Would you have had sex if the raid hadn't happened?"

"No. I needed time... for my own sake."

Frank appears to believe him. Hannibal plays his trump card.

"Honestly, Frank? Do you really see this infatuation lasting? As you say, I'm old enough to be his father. And he's off to university next year."

Frank's countenance lightens. "That's so! And he's lookin' at schools down South."

"There you go!" Hannibal hopes his airy demeanor is convincing. "Nature will take its course. He'll move on; I won't pursue him or stand in his way." *Till death do us part.*

Frank's mood darkens. "Three months...that's when he'll be legal; Will's already tossed that little tidbit of information my way. But there's somethin' else."

More?! "Yes?"

"The police had Will tested."

Hannibal's stomach plummets. "Yes?"

"Man to man...right now. What will they find?"

Hannibal doesn't even hesitate."My saliva in his mouth, a small amount of alcohol; the wine...and trace amounts of Rohypnol in his urine."

"Rohypnol?! That date rape stuff?"

"Yes. He was so... worked-up; now I understand it was because of his attraction to me. I slipped a tiny portion into his wine so he would sleep. I apologize Frank; it was a stupid, irresponsible thing for me to do."

"Rohypnol, huh? Why do you have that?"

"I bought it for Nigel's visit; I was angry about Richard."

"You were gonna kill him with it?"

"No...Maybe... I don't know. At the very least, I needed a means to neutralize him until I had made up my mind."

"But you didn't do it...not then anyway."

"Not then, no."

"Don't shit where you eat?"

If Frank's black humor is any indication, Hannibal thinks he's nearly out of the woods.

"Something like that," he smiles, showing his relief.

Franks shakes his head and sighs. "Well, don't use it on my boy again."

" Of course not!" *I have no reason to; not now.*

"Don't know if it'll make a difference, but if they find it, I'll tell them I was aware you'd given him both the wine and the drug; to help him sleep. "

Bull's-eye. "Thank you, Frank." Hannibal is the epitome of humble gratitude. " Thank you for trusting me."

"Not so fast. Trust is earned, but I'm willing to give you another chance for the sake of my boy."

"That's all I ask, the opportunity to prove myself."

Frank stands-up. "Alright!" He offers Hannibal his hand. "See that you do! I'm not in the habit of dishing-out third chances; not when it comes to Will."

"I promise, third chances will not be needed. I will never let you down, either of you." Hannibal vows, shaking Frank's strong, calloused hand.

" Hmmm...And for what it's worth...I'm sorry about Nigel. Blood is blood."

Hannibal's self-congratulatory preening comes to a grinding halt. Grief, sharp, bitter, and discombobulating washes over him.

"Thank you. He...he was the center of my universe when we were young...I owe him my life... but how did I repay him? By taking his."

Frank shakes his mournfully and claps Hannibal on the shoulder. "Don't tell Will," he advises and Hannibal readily agrees. Frank blows-out a puff of air and rolls his neck. "So! You ready?" He jerks his head to where Will and Lavinia are sequestered. "Ready to let the monster back in?"

Hannibal grins. *He's been here the whole time Frank... you just didn't know it.* "Yes, thank you, I'll follow your lead."

Chapter End Notes

Translation provided by blueyednightwing * a thousand kisses to you my dear!*

"Look at you! Disgusting! Worthless! Has there ever been a more disgusting, worthless, boy?!

Two or maybe three chapters to go!

Please leave a comment below- I appreciate the feed back- especially ConCrit- it helps- alot!

When This You See...

Chapter Summary

Hello!
Where has the time gone...sigh...I've been thinking about this story, just haven't found the opportunity to write.

Sorry it's so short, but I wanted to at least get something out.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Whenever I'm alone with you
You make me feel like I am home again
Whenever I'm alone with you
You make me feel like I am whole again
However long I stay
I will always love you
Whatever words I say
I will always love you
I will always love you
-The Cure

The rest of the night passes both too quickly and too slowly for Will.

At one point, he manages to catch Hannibal in the hallway with some purloined mistletoe only to be disappointed by the teeny peck on the lips.

"Seriously!? I'm not your *grandma*!"

Hannibal tries and fails to keep a stern demeanor.

"This is neither the time nor the place...and hear? They're calling for us."

Will groans; sure enough, Lavinia is calling his name.

"This is horrible! When do we get to be alooone," the boy whines as Hannibal takes his arm and pulls him reluctantly back into the common room.

"There you two are! Come along! Presents and my special Rum Toddy! Not for you Will," she adds noting his interested expression," I have grocery store eggnog for you."

Gross. "I'm okay."

"Hannibal? Frank?"

Will waits until the drinks are portioned out before coming to sit squashed-up against Hannibal; he would be on the man's lap if he knew he could get away with it. Will sighs lustily and shoots his father a sour look.

Frank laughs.

"Things have sure changed," he turns to Lavinia," when my boy's not interested in presents!"

The package I want is in Hannibal's pants. "Here Lavinia," Will says instead, handing her a present wrapped in tin foil.

"Oh! How lovely!" Lavinia peels off the foil." A first edition of Gift From The Sea! How did you know? Thank you, it's perfect!"

Will smiles up at Hannibal for whom the praise really belongs. "You're welcome."

"And this," Lavinia says, hefting a cardboard box from where's it been sitting in a corner, " is for you." She places it on the ground by the boy's feet. "Merry Christmas from Hannibal and myself!"

Will pulls the cover off the top, and peers inside before beginning to pull-out volumes.

"Shakespeare, H.G. Wells, Socrates..." He pauses, looking up at the woman.

"Yup! Pretty near all the classics you'll need for college and beyond!" Lavinia casts a triumphant glance at Hannibal who smiles and nods.

"Merry Christmas Will," the man says.

"Thanks!" *Uggggg. More books?* "They're great!"

Frank narrows his eyes at his boy."That is a very generous present! Thank you Lavinia, thank you Hannibal. That'll set him-up for all his days!"

"Yes! Well there was to be a scarf as well...but Will knows all about that. You'll have it by Epiphany...no, better make it Valentine's Day."

Hannibal rises quickly before Will has a chance to react.

He smiles around at the assembled group."I really must say my good nights now."

"Don't go!"

"So soon?"

Will and Lavinia retort simultaneously and Hannibal quirks his head at the boy. "Yes!," he turns to his hostess," I must insist. I've much too do and little time to do it before the New Year."

"Take some pie with you!"

"Thank you!" Hannibal says knowing the old lady will continue to press until he acquiesces. "That would be wonderful."

Frank stands-up and shakes hands with his friend.

"Merry Christmas Hannibal! Let's talk again... soon."

Will frowns and rolls his eyes. "Can I at least walk Hannibal to his car?"

Frank snorts with exasperation."Fine, fine. Go ahead," looking at Hannibal," but be back in five minutes.

"Okay..." Will is prepared to agree to anything, so long as he has an opportunity to shove his tongue down his boyfriend's throat. *Boyfriend! Hannibal is my boyfriend!!!*

The boy practically pushes Hannibal out the door with a cheery, "Be right back!"

As soon as the couple reaches the stairwell, Hannibal swings Will up into his arms and squeezes him tight.

"I thought I'd lost you Elskede," the man whispers, rubbing his check against the curly head and smelling the scent he'd missed so much. He lowers Will back down, but keeps their foreheads together.

"Don't go away again," Will begs.

The simple request has a dramatic effect; to Will's immense satisfaction, Hannibal pulls him back against his chest.

"No," he finally murmurs. "No more leaving....never again."

That is all Will has been waiting to hear. Like a crazed Jack in the Box, he pops his head up, smiling merrily. Hannibal laughs, shaking his head. *Well played hvlap.*

"Let's go to your hotel!"

But Will's doe eyes aren't working...not this time at any rate.

"No..." then quickly," I've promised your father we would wait, and I'm not going to break that promise."

Rather than argue, Will pushes Hannibal against the hand railing, wraps his arms around his neck and pulls him down into a ferocious kiss. The plate of pie goes flying as the two kiss and grope until Hannibal pulls himself free.

"Nnnnnn," Will complains, blissed-out but also uncomfortably engorged.

"Soon...and you haven't yet received my present to you."

Will's eyes widen. "I thought it was those books!"

"It was, and it wasn't.

Hannibal takes an envelope out of his inner pocket and holds it out. "Merry Christmas Will Graham."

Hoping for a nice stack of bills, Will greedily rips open the envelope to pull-out... one single sheet of paper with numbers written across it.

The boy's brows knit and he lifts a puzzled face. "What is it?"

The temptation is too great; Hannibal impulsively swoops down to kiss those soft, full lips once more and the paper wafts, unheeded, to the ground.

"Whoops! We don't want to lose that," Hannibal says bending down to retrieve the paper and handing it back.

"Numbers...what do they mean?" *Who cares! My dick is about to fall off.*

"We don't have much time...come to my car and I'll tell you." And with that, Hannibal vaults down the stairs.

Will yelps and sprints after him. "Hey! Wait for me!"

Hannibal laughs but doesn't stop until he's reached his rental.

Will catches-up."No fair! You had a head start!"

Hannibal pulls his keys from his pocket then looks solemnly down at the boy. "Those numbers...are me: every alarm code, every safe combination, every bank account, and phone number."

Will's mouth drops open and he stares bug-eyed once more at the numbers covering the foolscap sheet.

"Why are you giving this to me?" He whispers, catching Hannibal's solemnity.

Hannibal caresses the boy's soft cheek. "I've never shared this with anyone not even...Nigel."

Will leans into the warm hand. "Why are you sad? You can have it back if you want to."

Hannibal moves his hand to cup the back of the boy's head. "I'm not sad krølle...and I want you to have it...keep it safe and we'll go over it together another time. Alright?"

Will nods, turning to kiss Hannibal's palm as it's pulled it away. "Okay."

"Good boy."

The next morning, Will is leaving Nash's group home when he hears his name being called.

"Will? Can I talk with you? Just for a minute?" It's Lydia, the day manager and she looks concerned.

"Okay," Will agrees, hoping this won't take long.

"Can we go in the dining room?"

"Okay," Will says, following the woman. *Why is she so upset? Is Nash in trouble?*

"This might seem strange," the woman begins and Will's attention is instantly captured," but do you know Mr. Young in 10B?"

"Mr. Young? What does he look like?"

"White, mid twenties, he's only been here a couple months."

Will shakes his head. "I don't know him. Why?"

Lydia laughs self consciously. "It's probably nothing...but...would you come with me to see him?"

"Come with you? Where is he?"

"He's one of our most critical cases; he's confined to his bed, and doesn't react well to being moved."

Inexplicably a shiver of fear runs down Will's spine.

"Why me?"

Lydia gives the boy a long, steady, look before looking away and shaking her head. "It could be nothing..."

Will's mouth has gone completely dry. *Why am I so scared?*

"It's just that," she looks back into Will's face, "two times now, when you've passed his room...the staff has noticed...well, we've noticed he's become agitated and tries to speak."

"He can't speak?" Will does not like where this is going.

Lydia shakes her head. " No...I can't tell you the particulars of his case, except...you are the only person he has ever reacted this way towards. We think it's because he recognizes you, maybe from the neighborhood?"

Will's back hits the back of the hallway; he hadn't realized he'd been moving.

Lydia's face softens. "Its okay, Will, "she soothes," if you don't feel comfortable or..."

"Do I have to go into his room?" *Why are you even considering this? He's probably some perv!*

"No...you can just stand in the doorway if that works for you, and if Mr. Young remains calm, and you're still okay, we can go from there."

"Now?"

"If you're not busy. He's had his bath and lunch, so now's a good time."

Will imagines being strapped to a bed and unable to communicate."Well...okay...I'll do it."

In the three years he's been coming here, Will has rarely walked down the corridor he's in now, and then it was only by happenstance. His nose crinkles with the smells of bleach, human excrement, and plastic sheets. He follows Lydia to an open door.

"Mr. Young?" The woman's voice is high and cheery."You have a visitor...is that alright?"

Will cranes his ears, but picks-up nothing. *Maybe he blinks or something.*

"Very good! Will? Why don't you just poke your head around the door there, so Mr. Young can see you?"

Slowly, as though in a dream, Will walks the three steps to the entranceway where Lydia is standing, smiling encouragingly. He grabs the door jam, takes a breath and steps beside her.

The effect is instantaneous.

"UHHHHHHHHHH!"

Will's eyes are glued to the figure of a man strapped to the bed; his vocalizations are harsh and grating.

"UHHHHHHHHHH!"

Fearhatredfearhatredfearhatred.

The boy's vision blacks-out, like a head rush and when it clears, he feels Lydia's hand on his arm.

"Will? I think you'd better go." The woman says, rushing over to the bed.

Will stumbles out into the hallway, his heart slamming painfully in his ribcage. Rather than wait for Lydia, the boy hurries down the hallway and out the entrance, relieved no one stops or questions him.

He needs time alone, because he did recognize the tortured man on the bed.

And Hannibal would have too.

Chapter End Notes

Next time...the Big Reveal :-O

Hygge

Chapter Summary

Hannibal and Will cross their Rubicon

Chapter Notes

so I know I've promised this is nearly over- I've set the end to be in two more chapters. Whoot Whoot!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

I **was born to be with you**

In this space and time

After that

and ever after I haven't had a clue

Only to break rhyme

This foolishness

can leave a heart

black and blue

Only love

can leave such a mark

Only love

can heal such a scar

U2

"Well thank you so much Rollie," Frank consults his clock, "Will's coming back from visiting soon, I'll pass on the news. I can't believe our good fortune...yes, thanks again."

Frank hangs-up and sits back; thinking. *Will may not cotton to this idea. He's done so well here...but it'll be good, for all of us, to get some distance from this situation*. Frank stares unseeing across the shabby room, *nothin' to do but see how he'll take it.*

He pulls the book he's been meaning to read for months onto his lap, a warm feeling of contentment filling him.

Ahhhh...finally!

With a happy sigh, he cracks open the cover, burrows into the cushions of his easy chair and begins to read. He is soon so absorbed, he doesn't hear it when a text comes in.

Staying w/Nash c u @ 6

His mind seething, Will doesn't notice the commotion up ahead until he is practically upon it.

It's a wedding, or to be more exact, the tail end of one.

The bride and groom are standing at the top of the sanctuary's steps, laughing as pictures are taken. Down below, family and friends mill, offering-up good natured taunts, bags of birdseed at the ready for the final, frenzied gauntlet.

Will smiles in spite of himself, and is about to walk around the exuberant crowd, when he sees something which makes him stop.

Twenty feet away, a teenage boy and girl are capitalizing on the mêlée by making out behind a handy bush. Will can't tear his eyes off the pair as they kiss, nestled-up in one another's arms. Then the boy looks up and locks eyes with Will.

Tony.

The girl turns to see what her date is looking at. " Quién es ese?"

Will averts his face and decides to cross the street now.

Tony's laugh is derisively brittle.

"No se...un pervertido?"

His words pull Will to a sudden stop.

In a flash, pity is replaced by scorching rage. Will turns, his chin jutting scornfully; the other boy's false bravado evaporates like virga in the desert.

"Dios odia mentirosos," Will calls over, knowing he's hit his mark when Tony's expression kaleidoscopes to fear.

Will steps off the curb and into the street. He's nearly to the other side when he hears a shout; it's the girl.

"Hey! Fuck you! Vete a la verga, jojoto!"

Will barely registers the insult, he's already striding down the other side of the road.

That part of his life is over...over and done with.

He has bigger problems now than Tony and his beard.

Outside of the Mind Palace, Will pulls his Christmas present from his pocket and unfolds it. His eyes dart across the page of numbers until he finds what he is looking for.

23...15...88.

The boy twists the dial of the gate's padlock.

Nothing.

Shit! Okay, there must be another one. 42...74...2.

Will tries again, and this time, the tumblers fall into place with a satisfying *click*. He's in.

Fuck it's cold out here...maybe I can break into the garage...shit...it's connected to the same alarm system as the store.

Will pulls his phone from his pocket and texts Hannibal before he has the chance to lose his nerve. *It's now or never*.

Hannibal's hadn't expected to hear from Will so soon; who knew the teen would even be up at this hour during his holiday?

At the shop. Pls come now.

The man stares at the glowing screen. *Is he eager for the solution to his present? Something more worrisome?*

It will take me thirty min. Everything alright?

I'm fine. CU

By the time Hannibal pulls up, Will has all but lost his resolve.

Clutching a cold cup of coffee, he waits as the smiling man emerges from his car. *Fuck! He's so sexy!* "Hey!"

"Hey yourself!" Hannibal is about to hug the boy when Will backs away; he frowns. "Everything alright? Frank alright?"

"He's fine...can we go inside, I'm fucking frostbitten."

Hannibal shakes his head at the profanity; that is something Will must be trained out of, the sooner the better.

As the man fits the key into the door, he can't help but smile, his mind a foment of pleasurable images; young Will experiencing varying forms of chastisement.

Oh shit, He's thinking about sex? Fuck! It doesn't take much to rev-up Will's libido and it's pissing him off.

"Let's go upstairs and I'll turn on the heat in my apartment."

Within ten minutes, Will is sipping an ambrosial cup of coffee but turning down an offer of a snack.

"Sure?" Hannibal smiles teasingly," I've never known you to decline an offer of food!"

Only when I think I might throw-up any second. "This is good...thanks."

Hannibal settles himself on an armchair and waits expectantly; the boy is nervous, and now, observing him more closely, appears to be wavering on the edge of fear. *What is this all about Will?*

Finally, Hannibal feels compelled to break the silence.

"What is it Kæreste? Why are we here?"

Will carefully places his coffee onto the table.

"I saw Nash today."

"Good! How is he?"

"He's fine; he's going to visit Richard at Lavinia's."

"He'll enjoy that."

"My dad thinks I'm still with him."

"I see." *Has he come here for sex? Is that what this is about?*

Will stares down at his stockinged feet. *Maybe this wasn't such a good idea. What if he freaks-out?*

Will's heart begins to thump at the memory of the last time he'd been with Hannibal alone in his apartment.

"Will."

Will refuses to look up.

"Yeah?"

"Why are you afraid? Whatever it is...you can tell me. Let me help you."

The man's voice is so sincere, so filled with adoration, Will's eyes prickle.

"What happened during your visit? Did Nash say something?"

Will shakes his head. *Just fucking do it already!* He raises his delicately beautiful face.

"Remember that night we went to Walgreen's to buy a soccer ball?"

Oh. Not sex then. "Yes."

"Remember that guy? The one who yelled at us?"

For søren! "Vaguely."

"He lives at the group home now...I think...I think he recognized me."

"He lives there? He spoke to you?" *How is this possible? He, along with his tongue, should have been long gone... digested by some sewer rat.*

"No," the boy has to swallow a few times, a chill darting down his back at the memory of the disfigured man, " he...he can't talk...but he knows me."

Anger at his victim courses through Hannibal. He begins to stand, intending to offer comfort, but Will flinches and shrinks away from his touch. "Don't."

Hannibal sits back down.

Will is wringing his hands. *What does he know?*

"What happened to that man?"

The teen's quiet question is tossed-out to float in the quiet space.

Here we are then...it had to happen sooner or later.

"He lived...that was not my intent."

Will's pulse thrums in his ears. "You did that to him?"

Hannibal wishes that Will would look at him, but the teen is stubbornly gazing at the floor.

"Yes."

Will's face feels cold but his ears are hot. "Why?"

When Hannibal doesn't reply, the boy looks up; the man is studying him closely, but he's not angry.

"Because he was a threat to you."

Will blinks, taken aback. "He was?"

"Yes."

Hannibal's interrogator falls silent.

"Are you afraid of me now?" The concept is a shard of obsidian twisting through Hannibal's chest.

Will shrugs; once again withholding eye contact.

"Are you thinking someday I will do the same to you?"

Panicked the boy's eyes dart upwards.

" Nej! No! I wouldn't. Ever."

The boy looks queasily uncertain. "You chocked and drugged me."

A layer of guilt is added to Hannibal's strata of emotions, he shifts in his seat; Will monitoring the man's reactions like a hawk.

"I'm sorry Elskede. If you'll allow me... I plan to spend the rest of my life making it up to you."

A lifetime...with Hannibal!

In spite of his better judgment, Will feels a thrill of excited arousal at the thought.

Still, there's more he needs to know. Boldly he sits up straighter and raises his eyes.

"Have you ever done anything like that before?"

"What?" *Botched a simple wet job?*

"Hurt someone...killed somebody ?"

Hannibal stands at the shore of his Rubicon, the waves lapping his feet hot and viscous as blood.

He dives in.

"Both...many times."

Will swallows and nods; he's known this, at some primal level, since the day of his thirteenth birthday.

"How many?"

Hannibal shakes his head, but it's a gesture of consternation, an attempt to remember, rather than denial.

" Fifty? Sixty?"

Will's breath is snatched away at Hannibal admission. When he finds his voice, it's husky with fear and tension.

"You're a serial killer?"

Hannibal's chortle is a surprise to them both. "No, hvalp, I'm not a serial killer, just a man who's hurt and killed, first for survival, and then as a living...but I've given all that up." *More or less*.

Will's head tilts, his young face a passion play of fear and doubt; Hannibal curses his own flippancy.

"Except for that man."

"Except for that man." Hannibal confirms.

"Who you wanted to kill to keep me safe."

Hannibal nods. *Is he ready for more?* "If I tell you something, it must be kept between ourselves."

Will's eyes dart down and then back up again; he's made up his mind.

"Okay...what is it?"

"Your father's new kidney came from Nigel." *Best to grease the wheel a bit.*

"What!?"

"It's true. I kept him a prisoner in my safe room. A surgeon who needed cash agreed to do the retrieval. And well...you know the rest."

Will's thoughts are further thrown into confusion. *What the fuck!? A part of Nigel is in my dad?! Wait...what?*

"He was your prisoner!?"

"Yes."

"So...he didn't volunteer...you just cut him open and pulled-out out his kidney?"

"Well, I didn't personally, but yes, Nigel was not a willing participant."

Will bows his head. He can't help but be brought back to those dark days before Frank's operation: the fear and panic he lived with day and night, the pecking crow of anxiety cawing that his daddy's life was coming to an end, that he would soon be all alone.

Will's head lifts; he's remembered a night, a walk, and promise.

"That night..."

Hannibal nods encouragingly. *You're so close now*.

"...when we got pizza. You promised me you wouldn't let my daddy die." Tears are pooling, shimmering in Will's eyes.

"Yes."

Will stands-up and walks the short distance to where Hannibal is perched. Slowly, the boy raises his hand to cup the man's cheek. Hannibal closes his eyes at the gentle touch but otherwise doesn't move. He feels another slim hand on his other cheek and he looks up into Will's face.

"Thank you...thank you," the boy's voice tapers off.

Hannibal swallows a lump and nods, wishing he could pull Will into his arms but forcing himself to wait; it's vital that Will takes the lead at this moment. *Careful...careful.*

"You're welcome beloved...I would do anything for you. Please believe me."

Will takes a deep breath and drops his hands. He looks so young and bereft, unsure of himself, that Hannibal takes a chance.

He lifts one strong, tanned hand; an offer.

Will stares at it before taking it in his own. Slowly, cautiously, Hannibal takes Will's other hand and pulls him towards him, gauging the teen's reaction until their legs are touching.

"Sit with me?"

Will nods.

That is all Hannibal has been waiting for.

He pulls the pliant boy onto his lap and Will folds into him. Will rests his head on the man's shoulder and rubs his cheek back and forth a few times before laying a sweet kiss to Hannibal's neck; a Mona Lisa smile playing on his lips.

Hannibal stares down at the lovely creature cradled on his lap, kisses Will's forehead once, and then rests his head against it. The boy is already half asleep, worn-out by the day, and Hannibal plans to soon follow.

Their Rubicon has finally been crossed...and here they sit, intimately connected; safe and sound on the other side.

Hannibal looks around at his apartment; it's clean lines, modern furniture, and beautiful artwork. The boy is a warm weight on his chest.

So... this is what Hygge is. I've often wondered.

Hannibal closes his eyes and feels his body melt into the cushions.

Tak lillebror. Uden dig ville jeg ikke have dette. Sov godt hvor end du er.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so the assumption here is that Tony is not bi (and Will is a little bitch to him)

Hygge- is used to describe something cozy and comfortable. It is a state of mind as much as it is an experience. Hygge sums up the mood and ambiance of a situation. Oftentimes hygge is experienced during the cold Danish winter evenings when candles are lit on the coffee table, a good movie is on the TV and you are cuddled on the couch with your loved one. Hygge is the feeling you get during the holidays when your house is full of family, traditions and all the right ingredients to make memories that last a lifetime.. Source: smartling.com

Tak lillebror. Uden dig ville jeg ikke have dette. Sov godt hvor end du er. -Thank you little brother. Without you, there wouldn't be this...sleep well wherever you are.

"Truck"

Chapter Summary

Frank and Will have a fight. Will and Hannibal share a memorable afternoon.

Chapter Notes

Please note added tags.

I've tagged for dub-con because of the age difference.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's nearly five by the time Hannibal drops Will off at his apartment.

Outside his door, Will grimaces; Frank has gotten into Grandpa Graham's stash of old records again.

Freight train, freight train, comin' round the bend
One of these days turn that train around
Go back to my hometown

"Dad?"

Frank looks up from the album cover he's reading and smiles happily."Hey champ!"

"Can you turn it down?!"

"What? Hold on..."

Frank lifts the needle off the record player and Will breathes a sigh of relief. "Nevermind... did you get my text?"

"Yup! How's Nash doin'?" Frank goes to pour himself another cup of coffee," Want one?"

"Sure...and he's fine." Will scans the room; albums, books, and photos are strewn everywhere. "What've you been doing all day?" He picks up a photo of himself as a toddler, asleep with Hambone the second as a pillow.

Frank's head pops around the corner. "Jus' taking a stroll down memory lane. Want milk?"

"Yes, please." Will says absently. He's sifting through the stacks of pictures, many of which he's never seen. "You did Track?"

Frank hands the boy a mug. "Track, cross country...a little swimming but I never took to it like I did the running." Absorbed in his own thoughts, he blows on his coffee, feeling Will watch him.

"What?"

My son, the mind reader."I need to speak to you about something...no, not about Hannibal."

"Fine," Will throws himself onto the couch. *Another lecture! What a surprise.*

"Do you remember Rollie? I usta to work with him. He'd have us over for fish fries during summer."

Will shakes his head. Though they moved not quite four years, he's already forgotten most of his childhood memories; for him, life began when he came to the city.

"He and his brother bought our house, thought they'd rent it out; make a little money."

"He wants to know if you'll move back." Will's heart is in his mouth.

"That's right... and he's offered me a job."

"You can't do that work anymore! That's what you said!"

Frank rubs the back of his head, he hates disappointing his boy. "I would be an office manager...no heavy work."

The memory of nestling into Hannibal's arms flashes across Will's mind. "I guess you should take it then."

"You do?" *That was easy...too easy.*

Will forces himself to take a casual sip of coffee. "Mmhmm. You never did like it here."

"Well...great! But we'll have to hustle; we have less than a month to pack-up and move."

Will nods and takes another sip. "I think you should do that."

Frank's face sharpens. "I should do that? You know... we're both going; right?!"

Will hopes he's channeling Hannibal's cool exterior, because inside he's a hot mess. "I'm not moving back there. I'm staying here."

There it is. Frank puts down his coffee cup. "No."

Will's cool slips. "No?!"

Frank shakes his head. "No. You're not staying here. We're moving back home...together."

"Dad...stop." Will's voice is shaking, but so far he hasn't raised it," I'm not moving back there. Do you even know what it's like for gays down there?"

This is the first time Will has been so verbally forthright about his sexuality, Frank's taken aback; his boy's demeanor is so calm and mature. "It's not that bad."

Will snorts. "Says the hetero! I'm not leaving the city to go back to Deliverance-ville!"

Frank throws his hands-up. "Fine! I'll tell him no." He picks up his mug and stares into it.

Sadnessdisappointmentfearsadnessdisappointmentfear.

There are times when Will fucking hates his empathy. He sighs."Don't do that dad. It's a good deal. You should take it."

"No."

"I'll be fine! I can..."

"Even if you could stay here, did you ever stop to think that maybe I don't wanna be alone!?" Frank's emotions are icy spikes ."What!? The thought never occurred to you buster?!"

shameembarresmentshameembarresment. Frank walks to the window.

Will stares; speechless.

When Frank speaks again, he's regained control. "I lost my father when I was younger'n you...my brother when I was twenty." He clears his throat. "I remember the day the scan showed you was a boy...I was so happy," Frank's voice drops, he's back in the hospital exam room," my boy..." His voice trails off, then it hardens. "Nevermind...forgit it."

"Dad..."

Frank turns; his eyes hooded and angry, his face tight and drawn.

"Save it." The man grabs his keys, and ignoring both the dog and the boy, walks out the door without another word.

Daddy.

For a moment, Will feels like that little boy in the truck again; helpless, frightened, and lost. He gives himself a mental shake. *No! You're not fucking four years old! Dad will be fine! I was going away to college anyway!*

Slightly comforted, Will decides to tidy and organize Frank's mess; a tiny peace offering, but his thoughts are solely fixated on Hannibal.

Hannibal and the life they will build together.

Frank doesn't come home until two in the morning and when he does, he's not alone.

While his father was out, Will had made the fortuitous decision to switch the sleeping arrangements. Hearing a woman's giggle; he's suddenly very glad he did. Will's noses wrinkles. *Dad brought home a hooker?*

The boy pretends to sleep as Frank bumbles around, managing to step on Hambone, drop his keys, and knock over a lamp all in the course of two minutes. "Shit!"

"Frank? Maybe we should turn on a light?"

He told her his real name!?

"Hol' on..." Frank is clearly sloshed; the boy can smell him from here. *Ewww Dad! What the actual fuck!?*

The sound of keys jingling and breathless whispers. Frank and the woman fumble down the hallway in the dark and into the bathroom. The shower starts and even with a pillow over his head, Will can still hear everything; the murmer of voices, low laughter, and soon moans. *Oh...my...God! Dad! You are so disgusting!*

Will grabs his ear buds and listens to music until the sun comes-up, but he must have passed-out at some point, because when he wakes-up, the apartment is empty.

Walking around, Will does a bit of cautious snooping. The bathroom smells different, more girl-like. He counts four crumpled condom wrappers on the floor of the bedroom. *Gross! I'm not picking those up!* He purposely avoids looking into the garbage. *Guess they had to go out for breakfast after that marathon!* The boy shoots a sour look at the destroyed bed. *No way am I going to sleep on that! And I'm not doing his laundry!*

Over the phone, Hannibal is completely unsympathetic. "Good for him! Why does this bother you?"

Will rolls his eyes and stops for Hambone to smell a bush. "Cuz she's probably nasty and full of STDs!"

"Why do you assume she was a prostitute? *Frank could pull anyone he wants.* And I thought you said they used protection?"

"They did! But Dad hasn't been *out there*...like in...forever."

Hannibal laughs. "You sound jealous."

Will stops; Hambone tugs at his leash and the boy slowly begins to walk again. "I am not!"

Silence.

"You know he's moving." The words squirt out of Will before he can stop them.

"Who? Frank? Frank is moving in with this woman?"

"Noooo!" Hannibal can practically hear the boy's eyes rolling." Back home! He got a job offer."

"Oh..."

Will grins. *Let him dangle a bit...jealous?! Who's jealous now?!*

"When did all this occur?"

Ha! He's worried! "Last night. And we get to have our old house back. Dad loves that place. His great-granddad built it." *Total lie! Haha!*

The extraneous information is Will's tell; Hannibal is instantly suspicious. "So you're both moving back to Georgia?"

"Yup. At first I didn't want to...but then I thought 'I can't leave dad!'" Will grins puckishly. *Hannibal is going to freak!*

"Will! That is marvelous!" The boy's mouth drops open. " I've been hoping something like this would happen! I'm so happy for the two of you! When are you leaving?"

Fuck!Shit! "Well...it's not all settled...he's still gotta do a few things...talk to a couple people."

"Of course. But it all sounds very hopeful! I need to hang-up now so I can call Lavinia and Nash's group home. I need to start planning your send-off celebration!"

Fuckfuckfuck."Um.. maybe you should wait."

Hannibal's eyes crinkle; he's having the best time. His tone becomes chiding. "Will, I am a busy man and proactive organization is the cornerstone to my success! I just can't throw a..."

"I'm not going...okay! But the other part is true, he did get a job offer back home!"

Hannibal bites back a laugh. "Will...were you purposefully telling me a falsehood?"

Will makes what Lavinia calls his 'zombie face.' "Is that your fancy way of asking if I lied to you?"

"Answer the question hvalp!"

A jolt of pleasurable fear runs down Will's back.

"Yes."

"Speak-up!"

"Yes!"

"Yes...what?!"

"Ummm...yes sir?"

Hannibal hums appreciably. "Mmmmm,"

Will presses his ear to the phone; Hannibal's voice is liquid sex. "Hello?"

"I'm here."

Will tries to control his breathing, but it's hard. "So...I'm sorry I lied. I was just joking around."

"Where are you now?"

The question is a surprise. "Walking Hambone. Why?"

"Take the dog back to the apartment then wait outside on the curb. I'm coming to pick you up." The man hears the boy's audible intake of breath. *So ripe...so needy.*

"Um...okay. " *What about dad?*

"Not for sex hvalp."

"What?! I thought..."

"No. But that doesn't mean we can't enjoy ourselves." This time, Will's gasp is low and throaty. *Perhaps he forgot to breath?* "Will? Are you still there?"

"Yes!" Will is jogging. "I'll be home in five."

"Very good. I'll pick you up in twenty minutes."

"Okay."

"Goodbye."

"Bye."

As Will rounds the block, he begins to run, Hambone lopes along beside him.

Fifteen minutes...plenty of time to beat one off before he gets here.

Will is just out of the shower after one of the best orgasms of his life when a text comes in.

Hey- be home for dinner. We need to talk.

Ugggggggg! Cockblocker!

kk

As he pulls on clean clothes, Will gives himself permission to be a little late getting home to Frank. *No way am I going to miss out spending time with Hannibal for a stupid family meeting!* He kisses Hambone's wet nose and sprints down the stairs. A few minutes later, Hannibal's car pulls up and the boy climbs inside. "Hey!"

"Hello Will."

Whatever the teen was expecting, it wasn't this; Hannibal is cold and distant. *What the fuck?! Is he still mad? I was just a little joke!* "Soooo, what are we going to do?"

"Training."

Will's mouth scrunches up; he looks over at Hannibal. "Training? Like exercising?"

Hannibal nods and his lips quirk. "You could call them exercises."

Pure carnal lust and control is pouring from the man beside him. *Oh...ohhh.*

"Have you ever been spanked Will? Tied-up?"

Wait... did I tell him about my bondage kink? Fuck! "Umm...no. "

"Would you like it if I were to do those things to you?"

Will has to swallow before he can speak. "Ah... yes."

"Yes?" Hannibal shoots him a look.

A warm sensuous feeling is snaking around Will, a wave, tugging him down, making him feel small and helpless; owned, controlled, but not afraid. "Yes... sir."

"This is not simply about inflicting pain. This is about the surrender of control; the giving and taking of mutual pleasure. Do you trust me? "

"Yes, sir." Will doesn't even hesitate; his big 'O' in the shower is already a hazy memory.

"No sex," Hannibal glances over and Will's lower lip juts out. "Not today. And from this moment on, you will speak only when spoken to. Do you understand? Do I have your consent?"

"Yes, sir." *No sex? Fuck! I wonder what kind of toys he has...maybe a collar...*

"Will? Pay attention!"

Will is dragged sharply back from his fantasies. "Yes sir."

"Do you know what a safe word is, and how to use it?"

Holy Fuck! This is really happening! "Yes sir."

"Good. I don't want to push you into something you're not comfortable with. What is your safe word?"

Will's mind is drawing a blank. "Uhhhhhh."

"We can't proceed until you have one."

"Truck!" Will blurts-out the first thing he sees.

Hannibal bites on the inside of his mouth. "Truck. And when will you use it?"

"When I want you to stop...sir." *No sex? What the fuck!?*

"Excellent. Here is a keycard to my room; 115. Wait ten minutes then meet me there."

Will takes the plastic card. "Room 115. Yes sir."

This time, Hannibal's smile is warm with approval and the teen's inside's melt.

"Good boy. I will see you upstairs in ten minutes."

Will opens the door. "Hello?"

"In here." Hannibal's voice is calling from a distance. Will walks through a foyer bigger than his apartment's living room; he takes a moment at the mirror to smooth down his hair. "Will? I'm in the master bedroom."

"Coming!" *I wish.*

The boy walks through a living room, dining room and attached kitchen. The hallway is carpeted with thick Berber and he wonders if he should take his shoes off.

Hannibal appears at the end of the corridor and the walls seem to elongate. Will's heart thumps painfully; his dick is tight in his jeans.

"You made it. Come here."

Will comes gladly, staring.

Hannibal is dressed in a burgundy silk kimono which leaves his broad chest bare. The boy's eyes dart around the man's body, but remembering Hannibal's dictate keeps silent. *Fuckfuckfuck. Does he have anything on under there?*

Smiling, Hannibal takes Wills hand and leads him into the suite's bedroom.

The space is all ivories, creams, and dark wood; potted orchids, and black and white photographs its sole decorations. Hannibal allows the teen time to take everything in before pulling him into his arms. Will melts into him, his trusting eyes glued to the man's face.

"What is your safe word?"

"Truck," Will manages. Will has never seen Hannibal's naked chest before; its hair is thick and springy. This close, Will can feel the man's erection through the thin robe, huge and free; it, presses against his stomach. He bites back a whimper when Hannibal leans down and kisses him, then yips in surprise when the hair at the back of his neck is grasped and his neck is jerked backwards. The man is glaring fiercely, into his face. "After this point, only your safe word will stop me. Do you understand? " Will nods. The fingers in his hair give a little tug.

"Yes, sir. I want this." He swallows, his Adam's apple pulled taut in his throat.

Hannibal's muscles bunch, and then Will is on his knees, a hand presses his head down.

"Hands behind your back. Don't look up."

Will places his arms behind his back and sits back on his heels; it's uncomfortable, but not painful.

Gentle fingers trace along the nape of his neck and he shivers appreciably. "Good boy."

Yes.

The sounds of fabric falling and naked feet come into Will's field of vision; long, bony, but graceful as well. He nearly disobeys and looks up; the need to follow those tanned feet up past muscled shins...up to...but he stops himself. *No! Be a good boy.*

The feet come closer until they are inches from his knees. *Big feet...big..."*You may look up."

Cock.

Will has never considered himself a cock slut until this moment.

Hannibal's erection bobs inches from his face; thick, swollen red at the tip, intact foreskin, rosy pink shaft ending in a neat swathe of dark pubic hair. *Holy shit! It really is like a baby's arm holding an apple.*

"Do you like what you see?"

Will laughs nervously, because damn it, he does. "Yes sir," he says, watching as a bead of clear precum slowly emerges from Hannibal's penis and begins to slide down the tip. Will bites his lip and straightens his spine, tempted he'll lean-in to lick that drop right off.

Hannibal's eyes darken and he stiffens; another droplet of precum oozes out.

Will's thighs and shoulders are burning; he shifts minutely. Hannibal catches the movement but decides, for this first time, leniency is in order."Stand up! Keep your eyes on the floor."

Will stands up, swaying slightly; Hannibal has moved away.

"Come here."

Will walks until he sees Hannibal's feet and legs; he's on the bed and Will's erection gives a glad throb. *Nosexnosexnosex.*

"Undress."

Although Hannibal has already seen him naked, somehow, this is different. Will removes his hoodie and t-shirt. Hannibal's gaze lingers on the boy's nipples, noticing how stiff they've become in spite of the warm room. *Ideal for clamps...I wonder how he would like that*. Will pauses, hands poised at the waistband of his sweatpants. "Yes, keep going."

Will nods and toes off his shoes before pulling down his sweats and boxers. He wonders if he should fold everything neatly but decides to wait for orders instead. His socks are added to the pile.

"Hand's behind your back, eyes down."

Hannibal's feet leave Will's field of vision. He has no idea where or how close the man is. His erection is beginning to wilt under this strain of uncertainty when a warm hand cups one side of his ass. Will twitches, but regains control. Now two large hands are massaging his ass, up and down, spreading the two sides apart. Fingers are probing his crack, closer and closer to...

"Lie face down on the bed."

Will falls over the bed in his eagerness and closes his eyes. His dick is already hard again. He holds his breath as his ass cheeks are pulled open, the air is cold down there; his hole is twitching with anticipation.

SMACK!

The sound shocks Will long before the pain registers.

SMACK SMACK SMACK.

Will's body instinctively moves in an attempt to escape the stinging slaps. A heavy weight presses down on the small of his back, holding him in place. Hannibal continues to spank the boy's round, tight bottom. Almost immediately the pale flesh turns pink, soon, it is a fiery red and Will is jerking under his grip. Hannibal stops, hand inches over the boy's rear. "Stop moving or I will give you more."

Will tenses, his breathing is fast and ragged, but he nods.

"Say the words."

"Yes, sir."

SMACK SMACK SMACK.

After thirty spanks, Will stops trying to keep count. He knows he holds the power to end this at anytime, but something compels him to stay compliant. The pain is bright and sharp and pushes everything else out of his mind. He bites the bedspread, swearing that his heartbeat has moved to his ass and begins to cry; the first tendril of fear curls through his stomach.

Then... nothing.

The boy holds his breath. *Oh God...it's worse when he stops! I don't think I can take anymore and my dick is going to fall off!* His tears have saturated the duvet; Will turns his cheek into the cool, soothing wetness.

"Will?"

"Yes, sir."

"Stand up."

Will pushes himself up off the bed and nearly collapses. Hannibal catches him, his body a solid presence across Will's back. The skin on the boy's fair bottom is already bruising. Hannibal feels a surge of regret and fear; he hadn't meant to go so hard for their first time. "Are you alright barnlille?" He murmurs, nuzzling and kissing Will's neck and ear. "You should have stopped me."

Will allows himself to go limp; his whole lower half throbs and pulses."I'm okay."

Hannibal runs a hand over the boy's heated flesh, smoothing away some of the sting. "You're so very beautiful, and you did so well...Thank you."

Will smiles weakly; exhausted but in a good way, like after a grueling race.

"I wish I could suck you off," Will's eyes shoot open at that," but I made a promise to your father." Will grunts and closes his eyes. "But we can bathe together. How does that sound?"

"Good," the boy sighs. He knows Hannibal feels guilty. "But if I can't sit down for dinner tonight...I'm telling my dad why." Will opens his eyes and looks-up into Hannibal's startled face and laughs. The tension bleeds out of the man, replaced by a playful pugnaciousness. He swings the boy up and over his shoulder; Will's ripe little ass is now at eye level and his boyish dick digs into Hannibal's shoulder. "We'll just have to take care of that, won't we?"

Chapter End Notes

So I'm not so great at writing porn but I tried!

Happy Birthday Will

Chapter Summary

Birthday sex.

Chapter Notes

This is it!
Thank you for reading, commenting and hitting that kudos button :D

And now I present our star crossed lovers in their final chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"I don' think I should be doin' this."

Will forces himself to relax at this, his father's fourth repetition of doubt; the boy's impatience is at a tipping point. *Jesus dad! Just go all ready!*

The man catches his son's eye and chuckles mirthlessly. "I know, I know..." He slowly lowers himself into his car; the first one he'd owned since moving to the city. "Don't let the door hit me on way out!" His grumbling tone masks real pain, but Will is ready for it.

"You'll be fine." Will places his palms on the frame of the car's open window. "And I'll be visiting you all Spring Break." This last concession had been forced upon the teen by Hannibal and it shows in his tone.

Frank seeks-out Lavinia's eyes; she nods, though her expression is strained. Frank's gaze drops and he takes a breath. "A'right then. I'm off."

A sudden chill of child-like panic courses through Will; *Daddy's leaving me!* He gives himself a mental shake. *No... I'm okay, I can do this.* He forces himself to smile and covers the top of his dad's hand. "Bye dad! Drive safe... and call us when you stop for the night."

Frank takes his son's hand into his own; he refuses to look into the boy's face until he has regained his composure, Will's grip tightens. *He's fine, you're fine!*

"Sounds good sport," Frank says gruffly. "Take care of yourself... study hard..." Frank's resolve to allow this to happen has never come closer to collapsing than it this precise moment.

Will squeezes his father's hand as Frank's words trickle to an end. "It's going to be okay." He says quietly," you just need to trust me."

Frank studies his son; when one is a Graham, an easy life is never guaranteed. "A'right...yes...you're right."

Hannibal and Lavinia walk up for their last goodbyes. The woman kisses Frank's cheek.

"Goodbye Frank, safe travels and don't worry about Will."

"Goodbye Frank," Hannibal reaches out his hand, "we'll take good care of him. Please don't worry."

Frank hesitates before taking the other man's hand.

Though the two had conversed dozens of hours over the past three months, eventually coming to a hard-fought but separate peace, Frank still finds it hard to believe how seamlessly this tall, well-dressed cuckoo had usurped his own position in his nestling's life.

"Being a parent and worryin'" he looks up into Hannibal's face, "goes together lik' peas 'n carrots." He shakes Hannibal's hand. "Take care of my boy."

"I will."

Frank starts the engine, Lavinia grabs Will's hand while Hannibal encircles his shoulders with one, long arm.

Frank stares at the tableau, committing every detail to memory. "Good bye," he calls and lets out the clutch. As the car pulls away, Will has a vision of himself as a small child running after it...but no...he looks up at Hannibal then back down the road; Frank is gone; Will's throat feels tight.

"That's that," Lavinia says in a matter of fact voice, "and I'm off."

Will and Hannibal walk her to her car. "You have a new bumper sticker," Will observes as Hannibal opens her door.

"Yes, BLM, gotta stay woke, even at my age," she says, giving Will a quick hug and waggling a hand to Hannibal. "You two..." her mouth twists in a sassy grin," be safe and I'll see you soon," she climbs into the driver's seat," and be sure to let me know when you'll be reopening."

"I will," Hannibal promises, slamming the door shut, "we're still on track for the end of March, but I'll call and let you know the exact date."

"You'd better," Lavinia warns, "because I'm looking into an some elder hostels and I might be traveling!"

"Sounds good. I'll let you know."

"Okay! Bye-bye! Will?! Be a good boy," the old lady's grin widens, "that goes for both of you!"

Will rolls his eyes as the car reverses down the drive. "Whatever!"

Lavinia laughs, toots her horn once and peels off.

Alone.

A shiver of pleasurable anticipation passes through the boy.

"Yes," Hannibal has been watching him," it's cold, let's get inside."

"Okay." Will takes the man's hand. *Eleven more days.*

The morning of his seventeenth birthday, Will wakes at dawn, his body humming with adrenaline. He sits up. *It's my birthday! Ow!* He rolls onto his stomach. *Guess I was a little too rough last night.* Will gingerly reaches down below his newly shaved balls and slowly sticks the tip of his pointer finger inside his entrance. *Ow...ow...ow.* He'd fingered himself open in the shower last night as part of a plan to present himself, plugged and ready; a surprise for Hannibal. Unfortunately nervousness and the toy's girth had proven too much and he'd abandoned the idea.

Fuck! Now I have to start all over! Where's that fucking lube?

Will's phone lights-up: **Dad**

Seriously? Cock blocking from a thousand miles away?! "Hi dad!"

"Happy 17th, son! Did I wake you?"

"No, I was up." *Literally.* "But I have to go in early for an advising appointment so I'm just heading into the shower."

"A'right, I won't keep you. Just wanted to wish you a happy birthday." *Have you screwed Hannibal yet?* Frank bites the inside of his mouth to keep from blurting out his thoughts. "I know you're legal now...and we've had The Talk...but..."

"Dad? I really gotta go." *HanguphanguphanguptheGDphone!*

"Okay, okay. Didcha get my card?"

"Yeah! Thanks for the check!" Will is stripping off his sleep pants as he walks to the guest bathroom. "I'll put it in my account today or tomorrow." He turns on the shower and checks himself out in the mirror. *Looking good Graham!*

"Good," Frank hears the running water but he doesn't want to end this call...not yet. "Maybe I'll call you after school, when is your last class?"

"One thirty," Will is bouncing with impatience, and he watches as his erection bobs along with him; he flexes his gluts. *Tap this ass!* "I really gotta go! Call me after class...okay?"

"Okay...but Will?"

"Yeah?"

"Please use protection."

*Fuck! "*Daaaaaaad! I gotta go! Bye!"

"Goodbye son...love you."

"Love you too! Bye!" *Whew!* Will turns off his phone.

"Christ on a cracker!" Will smiles at his own reflection while uttering one of Lavinia's favorite phrases then steps inside the steaming stall. He soaps-up and slowly begins to open himself up; it stings a bit at first, but soon little shivers of pleasure spike up his body.

"Ah...ah...ahhhhh." *If dad thinks...Oh shit yes...I'm not letting Hannibal go bareback ...ahhhh...he's fucking crazy!*

Will finishes his shower and goes back to bed to insert the plug. This time, it only takes a few seconds of resistance before he is able to insert it halfway. He takes a breath then bears down while pushing and...it's in. The teen lies there for a moment, knees up to his ears, just concentrating on what it's like to be filled this way. His puckered and lubed hole pulses as his body adjusts to the intrusion. Experimentally Will tenses his inner muscles. *Whoa!* He lazily pulls at his flagging erection a few times, but forces himself to stop. *Don't nut yet! Gotta save it up!* He grabs his phone and calls the school's twenty four hour attendance line to report he'll be out today with a cold.

Done.

Will sets the phone down and cranes his ears. Normally, by this time, Hannibal would be showering. Puzzled, he checks the time again. 6:01.For a second he forgets his stuffed asshole and sits-up too quickly. A jolt of sensation courses through him and he gasps. *Oh yeah...that. Should I bother dressing? Hannibal won't be opening for another four hours. Maybe I should just find him like this...mmmm...this is gonna be so good!*

Grinning, Will opens his door to stick his head-out. Total silence. *Weird...wait...maybe he's in bed waiting for me! Fuck!*

Downstairs, Hannibal smiles. He never bothered going to bed last night, and he's been amusing himself by monitoring Will's activities. *Now he's going into my room...he's discovering I'm not there.*

Hannibal cocks his head as footsteps pound down the back staircase.

"Hannibal?"

"In here." Hannibal places his cup of espresso down and waits.

"Wh- Oh...hi!" A very moist, very erect, and very naked Will is standing at the swinging gate.

"Happy birthday," Hannibal walks over to stand before the sheepish teen," you're still wet."

Will grins though he's uncomfortably chilled by now. "Couldn't find the towels," he jokes and Hannibal's eyes narrow.

"Hmmm...you've called your school I take it?" Hannibal runs a hand over the boy's shoulders. Will nods, shivering, and leans in, lifting his head for a kiss which the man obligingly gives. "Good." Hannibal pulls the damp body into his arms; his shirt is instantly saturated by Will's wet hair as he envelopes the boy, transferring his own body heat. "You need to dry-off and dress, " Will's head pops-up, " wait...I haven't finished. Dress and take care of the dogs and then," Hannibal squeezes the boy's firm bottom with both hands," we'll see what we can do to celebrate your special day."

Will clenches his butt cheeks, not wanting the man to discover his surprise quite yet. "Fine," he sighs, carefuly turning to shield his backside's secret, though his maneuver doesn't go unnoticed, "is there more coffee?"

"Of course, I'll have it ready for you when you're done."

"Great, I'll be back." Will sidles out through the gate, aware Hannibal is watching his departure. The dogs are yipping for attention, so he forces himself to hurry and is soon back down in the garden where he's met by Hannibal.

"See if they like these." Hannibal hands Will a sack containing two large, rubber balls. "They have a switch on the bottom."

"Cool! I've seen these!"

Will turn on the toys and throws them to the ground. Both dogs are instantly enthralled, barking and pawing at the rolling toys. Will laughs and lets himself out of the enclosure. "They love them!" He says, accepting his drink and kissing Hannibal. "Thanks for getting them those. That'll keep them busy for a while!"

"You're welcome. Hungry?"

"Not really."

Will's stomach gurgles and Hannibal laughs. "Breakfast first."

"Ugggggggg," Will complains, but obediently follows Hannibal back into the house and up the backstairs his plug pushing on a particularly sensitive spot as he rounds the corner. "Ah!"

Hannibal looks around. "Are you alright?"

"Yeah, just burned my tongue a bit."

Hannibal accepts the lie without comment and turns to hide a smile. "Careful. Would you like more milk?"

"No thanks, this is fine."

Hannibal can't help laughing at this and Will joins in with a nervous giggle. "So...what should we make?"

"I thought something simple. Eggs and toast?"

"Okay."

"Good. I'll sauté some filling."

Will has played sous chef enough, that he knows which utensils and pans will be needed; he sets everything out while Hannibal assembles the ingredients. "Dad called."

Hannibal glances over. "He did? How is he?

"He didn't say...just wanted to wish me a Happy Birthday. He'll call again this afternoon." Will studies Hannibal for a moment before coming over to hook his chin over the man's shoulder. "Don't feel bad...he's fine."

Hannibal's guilty twinge vanishes as he rubs his head against the boy's. "I like Frank. I'd like to keep him as a friend."

Will lingers for a moment before detaching himself and going back to the china cupboard. "You guys are still friends... he's just feeling... a little nostalgic ...or whatever today."

Hannibal stops his preparations to watch Will pull plates off the shelf, sighs, and turns back to his work. "You were all his for so long," The man's tone hardens; curious Will looks over to see why. "I understand why it's hard for him...I don't think I would never be able to do it."

"Good! Cuz that makes two of us!" Will's attempt at a joke brings a faint quirk to Hannibal's mouth but otherwise doesn't affect his melancholy. The truth is, there are times Hannibal finds himself worrying about the intensity of his attachment to Will; for both their sakes.

Will chooses to ignore Hannibal's dark mood as he sets the table. "Done!"

"Good, can you whisk the eggs please?"

"Sure."

Slowly, as the two work in tandem, Hannibal relaxes and the morning's comfortable atmosphere returns.

"Hey! We need to hurry!" Will says after his first few bites. " We're opening in three hours!"

Hannibal hums round a bite of omelet. "Not today."

Will's face lights-up. "You're taking the day off?"

"I am."

This is the first time Hannibal has divulged any part of his plan for today. *Fuck yeah!* " Great! So what are we going to do?" Any interest Will had in his meal is gone, supplanted by an urgent need to see Hannibal naked...now.

Hannibal regards the boy over the top of his coffee cup. "Scene or no scene?"

Will's brain nearly short-circuits from the intense rush of the images instigated by the man's simple question. "Ahhh...ummm...ahhhh. Hey! don't laugh at me! This is hard!"

Hannibal's amusement grows. "Don't hurt yourself hvalp! Perhaps I should choose for the both of us?"

Will frowns and tries to look mature. "I'm practically an adult now! I get to choose!"

"Alright...shall I be hearing your decision anytime soon do you think?"

"Can we do anything?"

Hannibal shoots the boy an imposing look. "What do you think?"

Will's eyes widen innocently. "Well...it is my birthday." He juts out his lower lip; a pantomime of puppy-faced sadness.

Hannibal laughs at that. "You said nearly the same thing on your thirteenth birthday." He wonders what is going on behind those clear, blue eyes.

"I don't remember that! But it doesn't matter. I was just a kid then!" Normally, their power dynamic gives Will a sense of security and support, but today, he feels like pushing boundaries. "What if I want to top?"

Hannibal almost snorts at the boy's seriousness and levels his gaze; Will looks a bit scared at his request.

"Alright."

"Really!? You'd let me?"

"Yes, under one condition."

Oh, oh, I knew that was too easy." What?"

Hannibal leans forward, he grins at the boy's sudden intake of breath. "That you don't top until after I've already deflowered you."

Will's lip curl. "Deflowered me!? Ew...like I'm some girl on Game of Thrones?"

Though Hannibal has never watched the show, he doesn't quibble with Will's choice of analogy. "Yes, exactly like that." He says with barely-there sarcasm.

Will looks confused. "You mean... like a rape fantasy?" His face brightens. *Shit! That could be kinda kinky!*

Hannibal shakes his head rapidly his whole manner radiating disapproval. "Nej! No, no, no. Not like that," then his expression turns salacious, " slowly, carefully...I want to open you up and savor every moment...savor all of you."

Will doesn't know what he'd thought Hannibal would want, but this isn't the rough fuck he'd been expecting. "Um...okay, I guess...do I get to come?"

Hannibal throws his napkin at the boy's head. "Of course you get to come! What sort of monster do you take me for?"

Will catches the napkin and laughs, peering at the man through lowered lids. "Do you really want me to answer that?"

Instead of answering Will's question, Hannibal sets down his fork, stands-up, and pushes his chair in. Will watches with bated breath; it's like he's at the top of a rollercoaster just before the drop. *Here... we... go!* He is beginning to stand too, when he's grabbed and tossed over Hannibal's shoulder.

"Hey! I wasn't ready!"

In retaliation, Will stretches his hands down to cop a feel and he's spanked, hard, for his trouble. "Ow! Are you sure this is how deflowering a girl is supposed to go?!"

"Be good or I'll get that lingerie out again."

Will goes limp. He hadn't enjoyed the feel of stockings, garter belt, and bustier, though seeing how turned-on it had made Hannibal had been sexy.

"Liar! You said I didn't have to wear that unless I wanted to!" They've reached Hannibal's bed and Will is bounced down onto it; he looks up accusingly and the man swoops in for a kiss. Will meets him halfway and when they finally pull apart, he's flushed and hornier than he's ever been in his life.

"Ooooo," he cries in what he imagines is a girl's high, falsetto," I'm just a poor, virgin girl!" He bats his eyelashes," I haven't even seen a cock before!"

Hannibal chuckles at his saucy boy's antics. "I don't want to make love to a girl, Will." He's lowered his voice to a husky timbre, playing-up his accent for Will's benefit. The man kneels on the bed and straddles Will's hips." I want to make love... to you."

Will lies back down, chest heaving. "What do you want me to do?"

"Nothing," Hannibal purrs, shaking his head slowly, he can't quite believe the long, painful wait is finally over. He cups Will's face with his hands and slowly, systematically kisses his whole face. Will's eyes slide shut and he forces himself to just accept it. He knows Hannibal prefers to lead, to dominate, but as the man works his way down his neck, then up to suck and pull on an earlobe with an impossibly hot mouth, Will can't help grabbing hold of the broad shoulders and rutting -up against him. The plug inside him moves along with him; he moans and writhes when it pushes against his sweet spot and then his sweatpants and underwear are being tugged off and his penis springs free.

"What is this?" Hannibal has spotted the plug.

"You don't know!?" *Why is he mad?*

"You told me you were a virgin to anal."

Anger brings Will up to his elbows. "I am! I mean, no one has ever been *in there*! Are you seriously pissed because of this? I thought you'd like it!"

Hannibal reins himself in; Will is both hurt and offended. "I'm sorry barnlille...that was stupid of me. I do like it...I just wish I had been the lucky person who placed it into you. "

"Humph!" Will lies back down wanting to hold a grudge, but knowing he won't stay mad for long. Hannibal is staring down at him like he's the most beautiful person he's ever seen. "Okay...I forgive you."

"Thank you," Hannibal glances over at a manila envelope on his bedside table. " Would you like to see my test results? And would you like me to wear a condom?"

"Like a STD report? I didn't know I was supposed to get one!"

Will is so sweetly flustered that Hannibal experiences a rare tug of conscience. "It's more for your protection than mine...but have you ever been tested?"

"No...not for anything like that. Do you still want to do this?"

Hannibal laughs. "I don't think I could stop myself at this point, hvalp," and Will grins with relief. "And what about a condom?"

"We probably should..." Will says in a way which means the exact opposite.

"Yes...it would be the responsible thing to do."

"Can...just this first time...can we not? Use a condom I mean?"

The inner caveman in Hannibal howls in triumph over the boy's decision. "Alright...not today. Lift your arms."

Will's t-shirt is added to the pile on the floor and then Hannibal is unbuttoning and unzipping his own clothes. Fight forgotten, Will stares-up, as miles of smooth, brown skin and defined muscles are bared to ripple and flex above him.

No underwear model, no porn star, or actor has ever looked as good as Hannibal. *And he's all mine.* Then Hannibal steps out of his underwear and Will tenses. Hannibal is...huge... and today all eight inches of that red, thick, cock is going to be shoved up inside him.

Will's struggle with his beginner-sized plug now seems laughable.

A warm hand is on the boy's knee and Hannibal's concerned face comes into focus.

"Are you alright?"

"Yes." Will squeaks. "I'm fine."

Hannibal climbs onto the bed and begins to nuzzle the boy's face and neck, kissing his way down to lip and lave his pert little nipples. Will writhes and squirms overwhelmed by the sensations though his worry hasn't lessened.

"Relax," Hannibal murmurs, rubbing his warm hand along Will's quivering torso. "I want this to feel good for both of us."

"Okay." The twinges in Will's ass seems to mock him.

Hannibal's hands and mouth are everywhere now, rubbing, stroking, pulling, licking, nibbling, and sucking. Will doesn't have a clue what is about to happen until Hannibal takes the top of the boy's weeping erection into his mouth.

"Shit!" Will nearly levitates off the bed at the sensation and Hannibal pulls-off.

"Relax," he repeats, and pushes back down, taking Will's whole length into his mouth.

"Ah! I'm gonna come!" Will yells, then yips as Hannibal squeezes the base of his erection.

"Not yet."

"Ahhhh! Fuck! Careful down there!"

Hannibal gentles his hold on Will's penis but continues to rub and lick the top of it. "Mmmmm, you taste delicious."

Will groans. He has a bad feeling Hannibal is into edging, and though those videos are fun to watch, he really wants to come. "You said you'd let me come...ahhhh!"

Hannibal has managed to fit both of Will's balls into his mouth and is rolling them around like fine wine. When he releases Will's sac, he taps the base of the plug. "I remember... May I take this out now?"

"Ow! Yes!" Will complains, twitching from sensitivity.

"One... two... three."

As Will pants, Hannibal slowly turns the plug until it comes free, but the boy doesn't have time to absorb what it's like to be so wetly open before his hips are lifted and what feels like ten inches of hot tongue is being pushed-up into him. "Shit!"

"Stay still or I'm going to tie you up." Hannibal warns as Will's coltish limbs flail in every direction. "Here, grasp your legs like this."

Glad for some semblance of control, Will grabs his own legs and holds on for dear life.

In spite of the plug, Will's hole is still tight. Hannibal pushes a thumb in and pulls sideways before adding his tongue back. Above him, Will is whimpering and trying not to wriggle.

"Does that feel good?"

"Yes!"

"Good, I'm going to add another finger now."

"Oh...okay."

Hannibal adds lube and then begins to spread the tiny, winking hole apart with two thumbs.

Will's breath catches; the burning sensation of his muscles being stretched is the first time he's felt pain; a fission of uncertainty passes through him.

"Alright?"

"Hurts...a bit." Will admits. To his relief, Hannibal stops and takes Will's cock in his mouth. As soon as Will relaxes, the man slots one finger back into Will's hole, stroking in tandem with the movement of his mouth.

"Mmmmm...ah, that's nice."

Hannibal hums his agreement, continuing his blow job while steadily adding a second finger; it slips in easily. *Finally.* Hannibal has never spent so much time and effort preparing a partner in his life, but he's determined Will's penetration will be as pain-free as possible. "Still good?"

"Yeah...really good." But when Hannibal comes up for a kiss, Will jerks his head to the side. "Ew...I don't want to kiss my own ass-juice!"

Hannibal hovers over the boy's face. "You need to get over that," he says, pinching one of Will's nipples. When the boy gasps, Hannibal sinks his mouth into the pink, parted lips and kisses him hungrily. Will stiffens at first, then begins to kiss back. He's smiling when they part.

"See? That wasn't so bad," Hannibal grins, repositioning himself once more over the boy's splayed legs. Will nods, and nervously watches as Hannibal dribbles lube onto his fingers and slowly slicks-up his massive erection. He pours a bit directly onto Will's hole and pushes one finger in, rotating and massaging as he goes.

"Ah! I'm ready, I'm ready!"

As soon as the words are out of his mouth, Will hopes his asshole is up to the challenge. He grips the sheets with his hands and spreads his legs provocatively.

"We'll go slow," Hannibal promises, pushing a pillow under Will's hips. "Just..."

"I know, I know...just relax."

"Kiss me."

Hannibal leans down for a kiss while rubbing his erection against Will's perineum. He waits until the slender body beneath him is pliant, before he pushes forward. The boy gasps and tightens immediately.

"Relax and kiss me."

Hannibal doesn't allow himself to go deeper until Will has relaxed again. Then he slowly, but firmly begins to push inside the spasming heat while ravishing Will's mouth and neck.

"Ahh....oh....oww...oooo." Will moans and whimpers, then, all at once, Hannibal is still. "Why'd you stop?" Will's ass feels like it might split open at anytime; he's amazed he's been able to take as much of it as he has.

"Because I'm all the way in...I'm going to start moving now."

Will draws in a breath which is forced out as his body is rocked upwards. Hannibal is thrusting in and out; not all that quickly, but fast enough that Will has little time to tense-up between thrusts.

"Good boy...let me in...all the way in."

Will tries to relax but can't deny it hurts. " Hurts," he groans. "You're dick's gonna bust my ass open!"

Hannibal reaches down with one lube-sticky hand and strokes Will's penis back to hardness. It feels good, but he knows it would feel better if there wasn't a giant cock stuck up his rectum. Then Hannibal changes position and warm, shooting pleasure courses up Will's spine. "Oh! There...right there! Ahhh...that feels amazing."

"Mmmm...you feel so good...so hot, and tight, and ...deep!" At the last word, Hannibal pushes himself forward roughly and Will squeals.

"Too deep!" He pants as Hannibal speeds up. "And...can...you...slow...down!?"

Hannibal forces himself to stop after one last, strong thrust which creates a loud smack against Will's tight bottom. He has a sudden blind urge to flip Will over, cover him with his own body and plunge into him until the boy screams with pleasure. He blinks and comes back to himself. *Not this time.*

"Like this?" Hannibal says instead, slowing his pace and adjusting his movements until he finds Will's prostate again.

"Yes...better." Will groans as Hannibal takes his penis back in hand, stroking and squeezing it.

"Would you like to try another position?" Hannibal asks hopefully.

"I'm okay," Will murmurs, closes his eyes as his orgasm builds. His eyes shoot open. "I'm gonna..." And then he's coming; coming with Hannibal's massive cock up his ass and Hannibal's fist stripping him. It's the longest, strongest, most internal orgasm he's ever had and just when he thinks it will end, another wave hits. Hannibal watches as the boy, speared-open on his own cock comes in long, powerful spurts and then he's coming too.

When it's over, he looks down to see Will staring up at him; blissed-out and drained. Hannibal pulls out, still half hard, and a trickle of semen dribbles out of the boy's reddened hole. "May I plug you?"

"Okay," Will says softly, though his fading orgasm is allowing him to feel how raw and over stretched he is.

Hannibal carefully lubes the plug and corkscrews it back in. He massages the boy's thighs and gluts almost apologetically. "I want my seed to stay up in you...deep, deep in you," he whispers throatily and Will's dick feels a whisper of interest.

"Okay," Will says, worn-out and compliant. He closes his eyes as Hannibal runs his hands over his body, kissing and licking until finally he pulls the boy over him like a living blanket.

"I love you," Hannibal says, carding his fingers through Will's hair.

"Love you too," Will murmurs, tettering on the threshold of sleep.

"I'll never leave you...never ever."

" 'K" Will breathes and is out; fast asleep.

"For evig og altid, det lover jeg,dig, " Hannibal repeats deep into the warmth of the boy's curls.

The End

Chapter End Notes

Note about age of consent: This varies in the US state by state. In this story, because Hannibal is older than 21, Will needed to be 17. Still not a fair power dynamic, but there

you go.

For evig og altid, det lover jeg dig -"Forever and ever, I promise you." Translated by the wonderous blueeyednightwing -a translator exemplor (as well as parent to an active kitten and three bunny sisters) - hugs for miles and miles.

If you have a prompt or a request for adding to this verse, message me at tumblr- same name.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!